



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

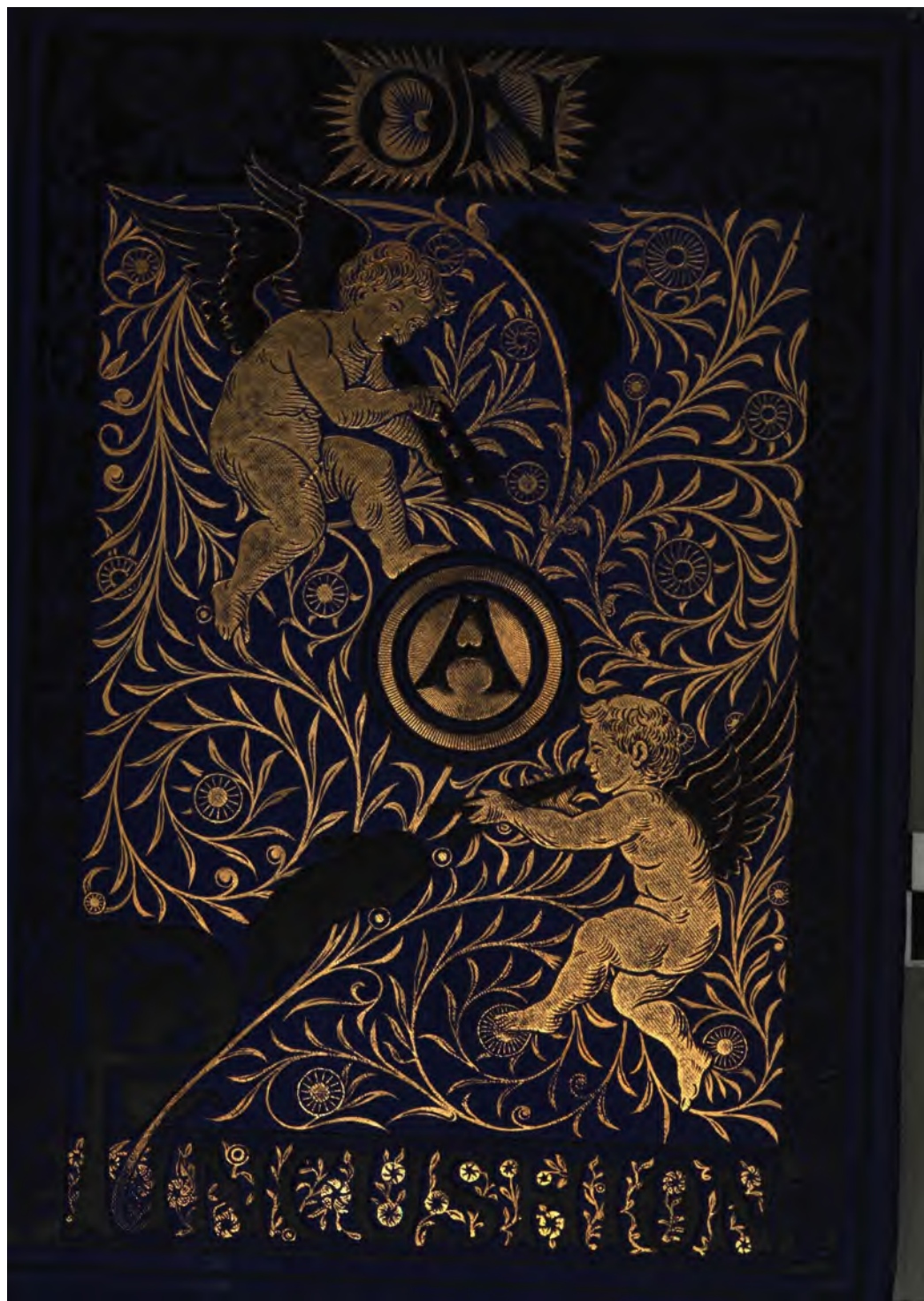
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

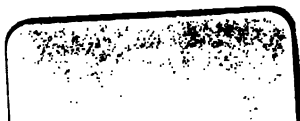
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600060966X



ON A PINCUSHION.







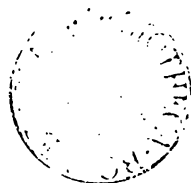
ON A PINCUSHION

And other Fairy Tales

BY

MARY DE MORGAN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILLIAM DE MORGAN



SECOND EDITION

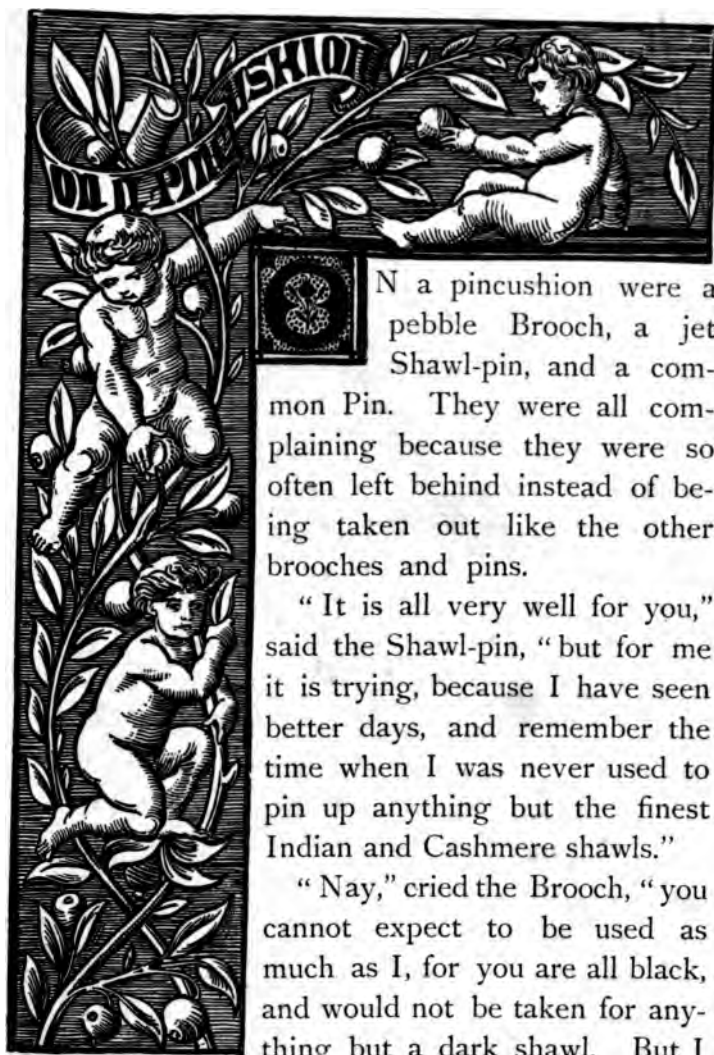
SEELEY, JACKSON, & HALLIDAY, 54, FLEET STREET
LONDON. MDCCCLXXVII.

251. c. 586

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
THE STORY OF VAIN LAMORNA	4
THE SEEDS OF LOVE	27
THE STORY OF THE OPAL	57
SIEGFRID AND HANDA	74
THE HAIR TREE	100
A TOY PRINCESS	153
THROUGH THE FIRE	177



IN a pincushion were a pebble Brooch, a jet Shawl-pin, and a common Pin. They were all complaining because they were so often left behind instead of being taken out like the other brooches and pins.

"It is all very well for you," said the Shawl-pin, "but for me it is trying, because I have seen better days, and remember the time when I was never used to pin up anything but the finest Indian and Cashmere shawls."

"Nay," cried the Brooch, "you cannot expect to be used as much as I, for you are all black, and would not be taken for anything but a dark shawl. But I

am all sorts of colours, and therefore might be used any day. I would sooner have been left uncut, unpolished, than brought to this."

"I don't think," said the Pin, "that either of you have as much cause to complain as I, for you are neither of you as useful, and might not be wanted, but I am always needed, and so many pins are taken every day that it seems hard I should be left here for nearly a week, and all because I am run so far into the pincushion that nothing but my head can be seen."

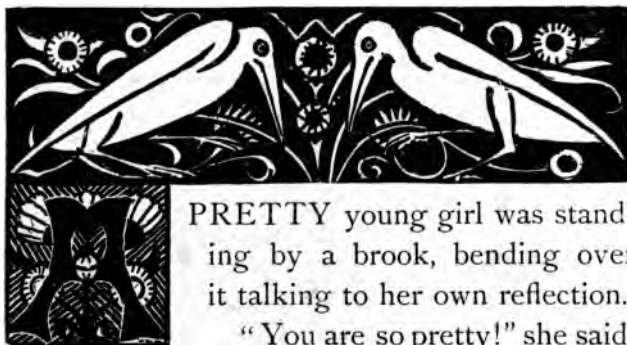
After a pause the Shawl-pin said, "I wish those Bracelets up there would leave off chattering. There's nothing disturbs my nerves so much as the clatter of talking."

"Bracelets are always great talkers," said the Brooch. "I once passed two months in a jewel-box with a number, and I was truly thankful when I was taken out. Their talking was incessant, and it was impossible to get a wink of sleep." And all three scowled up at the Bracelets, who were hanging over the looking-glass, but who did not mind them in the least, but went on talking just the same. "Let us do something to drown their noise," said the Pin. "Let us tell stories."

“ I will tell you one,” said the Brooch, “and I know it to be true, for it was before I was cut and polished, and I was at the place myself where it happened ;” and having cleared its throat, the Brooch began as follows.



THE STORY OF VAIN LAMORNA.



PRETTY young girl was standing by a brook, bending over it talking to her own reflection. "You are so pretty!" she said.

"There is not such a pretty face as yours in all the village."

The girl's name was Lamorna, and she was the daughter of a farmer. Every one told her she was very pretty, and so indeed she was. She had bright brown hair and big brown eyes, and a mouth like a rosebud. The brook by which she stood ran into the sea about half a mile farther down, and it was full of water people. Water people are a sort of elves, who live beneath the water, and never come to the surface, because if they were to breathe the air they would die.

They are not mermaids, but are shaped exactly like men, only they are never more than two or three inches high. They are very kindly and well-disposed towards human beings, and never hurt any one who does not hurt them.

But when the little water people flitted up and down under the water, and heard what Lamorna said as she bent over the brook, they shook their heads and sighed and said,—

“Lamorna! Lamorna! you will come to no good end if you are so vain.” But Lamorna did not hear them, and went on just the same, watching her fair face, and



6 *The Story of Vain Lamorna.*

smiling that she might see her pretty row of white teeth ; and there she stayed till the clock struck six, and she 'started away in a fright, knowing she would be late, to get her father's supper, and he would be angry with her.

No sooner was she gone than there came down to the side of the brook a young fisherman, who had been watching her unperceived. He went to his boat, and pushing it off rowed out to sea and began to fish. His name was Erick, and the water people knew him well. They often watched him, and knew that he was neither cruel nor wicked, but always was careful not to torture the fish he caught, but killed them at once. So they all liked him, and threw the best fish under his boat. To-day he seemed very sad, and sat leaning his head on his hand, scarcely noticing his lines.

"Ah, Lamorna !" he sighed to himself, "when we were children you said you loved me, and promised me to be my wife, and now you will not speak to me, though you know how I love you."

The water people had all gathered around his boat, and when they heard this they shook their heads and looked very grave.

"So it is all for Lamorna," cried one, "worth-

less Lamorna, who does nothing but look at her own reflection, and loves nothing so much as her own pretty face."

"Who is she," said another, "that she should scorn the love of a good young man like Erick? She has nothing but her good looks, and they will soon leave her. How can we punish her?"

"Nay," said a third; "what good will it do to Erick for us to punish her? Rather let us think how we can cure her of her vanity and win him her love."

"But you can never cure her of her vanity," said the first, "as long as she can see herself in her looking-glass or the brook; while she can see her own face, she will continue to be vain and foolish."

"Then what is to be done?" they cried all together; and there was silence, till at last a very wise old water elf spoke up and said,—

"We cannot keep her from looking in glasses or in the brook. There is only one thing, therefore, to be done. It will be difficult, but it is quite possible. We must wait till she is leaning over the water looking at herself, and then we must steal her reflection."

8 *The Story of Vain Lamorna.*

On hearing this all the elves gave a loud cheer. "You have got it," they cried. "Ah, what a fine thing it is to have a mind like that!"

"If my poor dear son had not imprudently gone over the top looking after a flying fish, and so been suffocated, he would have grown up just such another," said a lady elf with a sigh.

"With such a mind as that," said another old lady elf solemnly, "one could rule countries or take cities."

On this, the old elf who had made the suggestion bowed all round and smiled pleasantly, for he was a great favourite with the lady elves, and prided himself on his good manners.

"We now have to think," he went on, "how this can be done, for reflections are such difficult things to keep under water when one has got them, and rise to the top like bubbles. We must make a number of sand ropes to catch it with, and all pull it down together at a given signal."

"But," said a very young elf, "she still will be able to go and look at herself in her looking-glass."

On hearing this the elves all burst into a scornful laugh, and would have scolded the young elf for talking about what he did not understand ;

but the wise old elf stopped them with a wave of his hand, and said that he himself would explain to the young elf his mistake, as he was never angry with ignorance in the young, but he wished rather to correct it than blame it.

“Do not suppose, my young friend,” he said, blandly, “that people have more than one reflection. It is a common mistake to suppose so, but in reality there is only one reflection to each object ; only, as the object moves before a glass, the reflection moves too, so that all sides of it are shown. If we can steal this vain girl’s image as she leans over the brook, she will not be able to see herself in any glass.” He stopped, and all the elves applauded his wisdom again ; and the young elf felt quite ashamed of his mistake.

But now every one began to think of how this thing was to be done, and all busied themselves making sand ropes, with which the reflection was to be caught and tied. They agreed that it could be best secured by moonlight, when the water was very smooth ; and on every moonlight night some of them waited near the surface, to see if it appeared, and give warning to the others.

But Lamorna of course knew nothing of all

10 *The Story of Vain Lamorna.*

these plans, and was still happy looking at herself in her glass, and never thinking of poor Erick.

When he came to see her in the evening, and sat by the fire watching her, she did not notice him, but kept her eyes fixed on the mirror over the chimney-piece, and if he spoke to her of his love, she would laugh and turn away. Then if he sighed she would laugh still more and say,—

“Get yourself a wife, my good Erick ; that will stop your sighing.”

“I never can have any wife but you, Lamorna,” he would answer.

“Then you will have to wait a long time single,” she returned merrily ; “I do not mean to marry for ages—perhaps never—certainly not a fisherman.”

One night, when he went in to see her, he found her standing at the door looking at the moon, which shone brightly.

“Let us take a walk,” he said ; “let us go down to the sea.”

“Yes,” said Lamorna, “I will come ;” and first she ran into the house, and fetched a scarlet handkerchief, and tied it over her head, not because she was cold, but because she thought it made her look prettier.

The Story of Vain Lamorna. 11

"Let us go down to the water's edge," said she, taking Erick's arm; and then they strolled down to the beach together.

The sea was smooth as glass, and the bright big moon made it almost as bright as day. A row of steep rocks stood out into the sea, and on to these Lamorna would go, because she wanted to bend over and see herself in her scarlet handkerchief in the moonlight. So they sat down on the edge of the rocks, and Lamorna leaned down till she could see all her figure and her pretty face in the deep clear water. And, when they saw her appearing, the elves who watched gave notice to all the others, who stood waiting in a crowd with their ropes in their hands.

"Look at the moon, dear Lamorna," said Erick. "See how beautiful it is!"

"Yes, it is lovely," said she. But she did not lift her eyes from her own image. Then, at a given signal, the water elves threw up their sand ropes, and caught her reflection, and all pulled it together, and Lamorna started back with a shudder.

"Erick," she cried, gasping, "is anything the matter with the moon? Is it gone behind a cloud?"

12 *The Story of V*

"No," said Erick, surprised and bright as ever."

Lamorna bent over the water and drew back trembling, for her face had quite disappeared, and she

"Erick," she cried, "I want you help me to go home?"

Erick jumped up at once and ran directly across the rocks, and then to the beach to her house.

Meantime the water ebbed and flowed with delight. They were so busy that they were helping Erick and pleased for themselves, that they were pretty new plaything as Lamorna was thirty times as big as Erick and had to keep it tied down, lest it would surface and float away. They hid it in a grotto for it—between some stones they fastened it down—and they could look at it, though no one else could. It looked so like the bright red kerchief of Erick's lips smiling sweetly just as she had when she bent over the water.

STO12704 6/94

(and initials. In BLOCK capitals)

NAME..... S CHATRE

DATE.....

stamped below.
-6 JUN 1997

Books will be kept until the date
be reserved.

No books from open shelves may

The Story of Vain Lamorna. 13

"Now we know how she did her hair, and can do ours like it," said the young maiden elves; and they were never tired of examining it. At last one said,—

"It is so pretty, and poor Lamorna can never see it now. Shall we never set it free, and let it return to her?"

"On the day that she no longer cares about it, when she has ceased to be vain," said the old elf gravely, "we will cut its ropes, and it will fly to her wherever she is."

"But she may have grown old by then, and have changed so much that it would not know her," said the young elf.

"Then it will change too," said the old elf; "if even a wrinkle comes on Lamorna's face it will at once appear on the face of her image here, and should her hair become grey its hair would be grey also."

"Then it will be very amusing," cried the elves; "we can watch it and know how Lamorna is going on, and if she looks well or ill."

When Lamorna got home she felt frightened and uncomfortable, and she was cross with Erick for looking at her.

14 *The Story of Vain Lamorna.*

"Erick," she said, "don't you know that it's very rude to stare?"

"Dear Lamorna, I feared you were ill," said Erick, humbly.

"I am not ill," said Lamorna, pouting; "so do look another way."

"I shall never be able to please you, Lamorna," said Erick, sighing, as he looked away. "Are you determined always to be unkind to me?"

"Oh, don't talk so, Erick," cried Lamorna. "How you tease me!"

"Do I tease you?" said Erick, very gravely. "I won't do so any more;" and he got up and kissed her forehead, and went away without saying another word.

When Lamorna was left alone, she jumped up and ran to the looking-glass, in her usual way; but when she looked in it she stood still, staring in surprise, for she saw nothing!

"There must be something wrong with the light," she said, and she moved the candles; but when she turned again to the glass it was just the same. She saw the reflection of the room—only her own image was wanting.

"I declare it makes one feel quite uncom-

fortable," she said. "I must be ill. I'll go to bed at once; to-morrow, doubtless, I shall wake up quite well." So she went to bed.

Next morning she sprang up when the first rays of the sun shone in at the window, and ran at once to her looking-glass. But it was just the same as the previous evening. No likeness of herself could she see. At last she began to cry outright.

"I never heard of such an absurd thing!" she sobbed. "Not to be able to see one's own face in the glass. Either I must be very ill, or else something must be wrong with the glasses. And I dare not tell any one, for fear they should laugh or think I'm going mad. But I think I'll go down and tell Erick about it. He won't laugh at me, at any rate."

So she dressed as quickly as she could; but when she had to do her hair without seeing it she cried again till her eyes were red. She would not look in a glass all day, but when the evening came she went down the village to the cottage where Erick lived. She tapped at the door, and it was opened by Erick's mother, who stood behind it with a pale face and red eyes.

"Can I speak to Erick?" asked Lamorna.

"You cannot speak to him, for he is not here," said his mother, coldly. "And it is all your doing. He was so grieved by the unkind things you said to him last night that he could not bear to stay here any longer, so he is gone to enlist for a soldier, and go to the war ;" and his mother began to cry afresh. Lamorna stared in surprise.

"Why, how could it be my doing?" she said. "If Erick was so silly as to mind what I said, I can't help that," and she turned away in a huff. "But he needn't have gone away just now," she added, beginning to whimper, "for I wanted to speak to him."

"Then you should not have been so cruel to him," said his mother ; and she looked closely at Lamorna, to see if she showed signs of repentance.

"Why are you looking at me?" cried Lamorna. "Have I done my hair badly, or do I look amiss?" for she felt frightened as she could not see herself, lest her looks might have changed.

"You are a vain, heartless girl, Lamorna," cried the woman, angrily. "I only looked at you to

The Story of Vain Lamorna. 17

see if you were sorry that Erick had gone, and you are thinking all the time of your own looks, forsooth!" and she slammed the door in her face.

Lamorna turned back and went home. She tried to laugh when she told her father that Erick had gone to the war; but in reality she felt far more inclined to cry.

"I should not have minded telling Erick," she thought, "but I should not dare to say anything to any one else, lest they should think me mad."

As the time passed away, and she had new dresses and could not see herself in them, she cried afresh.

"I don't know what I shall do," she sobbed, as she stood in front of a looking-glass in a fine new dress that she had never worn before, and yet could not see herself in it. "I believe I shall go out of my mind. And I daresay I am growing frightfully ugly without knowing it." And she began to fret, and lie awake at night, and grow quite pale and thin.

"What is the matter with you, Lamorna?" said one of the neighbours. "You're growing quite thin. You mustn't get to look like that at your

18 *The Story of Vain Lamorna.*

age, or you'll lose all your good looks ;" and Lamorna shivered with fear as she listened. And again, another woman said to her, " Lamorna, you've not done your hair well to-day. You must not grow untidy, or you'll never look pretty ;" and Lamorna, who knew that her hair was not so well done because she could not see it, ran away to hide her tears.

So a year passed, and nothing had been heard of Erick.

Lamorna had plenty of other lovers, but as she grew cross and bad-tempered, and her enticing looks began to leave her, her lovers left her too.

Every year there was a great fair held in the village, to which Lamorna had always gone, dressed in her best, and looking her prettiest ; so when the time came round for the fair again, she determined to go, and to dress herself as smartly as possible, that no one might say she was less pretty than formerly. So she chose the prettiest dress she could find, and trimmed it with cherry-coloured ribbons, and then she took out her hat, and looked at it, and thought it was too plain.

" If I could get a new feather for it," she said,

“or some flowers, it would be much better. I’ll go out and see what I can find.”

She went to the village and looked at all the shop windows, and saw nothing that would suit her ; so then she turned into the fields, thinking she would pick some flowers to make a wreath instead.

She looked in all the banks and hedges, but all the flowers she saw she thought too plain, and she threw them away as soon as she had gathered them.

“If I can’t find anything prettier than these,” she said, “I will not go to the fair at all,” and she began to be cross.

At last she came to a large old tree, and on one of its lowest boughs was seated the loveliest bird she had ever seen in her life. Its body was bright blue, but its wings were striped gold and green, and it shone as if it had been set with jewels.

“Oh, what a beauty !” thought Lamorna ; “if I could but get some of its feathers for my hat, how happy I should be !” and she looked at the bird longingly. Presently she took up a large stone, and going softly under the tree, threw it up

20 *The Story of Vain Lamorna.*

at the bird, but the stone fell on the other side and missed the bird, who sat quite still and did not stir.

"You silly creature!" said Lamorna, "if you sit so still, I shall easily be able to catch you." So she ran to the back of the tree and climbed up it on to the lowest bough, and bending across tried to seize the bird. But the bird fluttered in her grasp, and she lost her balance and fell from the bough on her face. Underneath the tree was a little heap of sharp stones, on to which Lamorna fell, and her face was cut right across, and the blood gushed out. At first she lost her senses with the fall, but she soon recovered herself and started up and ran home crying. Of course she could not see the cut, but she felt the blood flowing down, and she washed and bandaged it as best she could. But when her father came in he stared at her in surprise.

"Why, girl," he cried, "what have you done to yourself?"

"I have fallen down and cut my face," said Lamorna shortly.

"Cut your face—that you have, and a bad cut too. But what made you put on the plaster like

that—half on and half off? I'll go out and ask some of the women to come in and do it for you, if you can't manage it better than that for yourself."

So Lamorna's face was bandaged, and of course she could not go to the fair. All thought it a very bad cut, and that it would most likely leave a scar for life. She had to lie in bed for many days, and she felt very sick and ill. But while she was thus lying alone she thought of a great many things which had never entered her head before; and most of all of Erick. She remembered how she had repaid his love with scorn, and she thought of how vain she had been of her beauty; and now it would all be gone, if ever he saw her again.

"And if it had not been for my vanity," she sighed to herself, "I need not have been hurt at all. It was only that which made me want the bird's wing. Ah, what a little thing beauty is to be so vain of!"

When her face was healed she strolled to the water's edge, and stood looking down at it. All the neighbours had been very kind to her during her illness, and no one said anything to

22 *The Story of Vain Lamorna.*

her about the mark on her face, but she knew well that her beauty was gone for ever.

"If Erick would only come back," she said as she stood looking at the water, "I should not now be always thinking about my looks, as he talked to me; I would think of him instead."

When the water elves heard her words, they flew to the wise old elf, and said,—

"See how hardly she has been punished. She is quite cured of her vanity. Let us cut the ropes of sand, and let her image free."

But the old elf shook his head, and said,—

"Not just yet. Wait a little longer."

As Lamorna stood gazing over the water, she did not know that some one came up behind her, but she heard her name called, and looking round she saw a soldier with only one arm standing by her. He was so altered and brown that she looked at him for some time before she saw that it was Erick. Then she gave a little cry, and holding out her hands called him by his name.

"Did you really know me again, dear Lamorna?" he said, coming up to her. "I thought you would quite have forgotten me by now. And see how changed I am—I have only one arm."

The Story of Vain Lamorna. 23

Then Lamorna turned her face, and showed him the scar. "I am more changed than you, Erick," she said; "see here." But she thought, "Now he will cease to love me, when he sees how ugly I am grown," and she felt inclined to cry.

But Erick said nothing about her face. Only he asked her if she were glad he was come back.

"I am very, very glad," she said. "Ah, how I missed you after you were gone!"

"Is that really true, Lamorna?" said Erick. "And all the time I was away I thought of no one but you; and now I should not dare to ask you to be the wife of a poor broken-down fellow like me."

"But if you will have me, Erick," said Lamorna, "I will be your wife and love you dearly;" and they kissed each other, and settled that they would be married as soon as they could. And then they went home to tell Erick's mother, and were as happy as they could be.

So they were married, and on the evening afterwards Lamorna asked Erick to go down with her to the rocks on which they had sat the evening before he went away. It was a beautiful

24 *The Story of Vain Lamorna.*

moonlight night, and the sea was smooth as glass.

"It was on just such a night as this that we last sat here," said Erick ; "but how different you were then ! Do you remember how unkind you were to me that night ?"

"Yes, Erick, indeed I do," said she. "But my looks were different then as well. I don't mind about them for myself, but I wish I had not lost my pretty face, as you used to admire it."

When the water elves heard these words, the old elf said,—

"Now is the time !" and they all hastened to the reflection and cut the sand ropes, and with a mighty crash it rose straight through the water to the surface, exactly beneath Lamorna's gaze.

"Erick !" she cried with a start, "what's the matter ? Has anything happened to the moon ?"

"No, dear Lamorna, it is all right. Are you ill ?" asked Erick anxiously.

"I think I must have been ill for the last year, and now I am quite well again," said

The Story of Vain Lamorna. 25

Lamorna, as she looked at her own face in the water.

“How much my cheek is marked! But I don’t mind it if you don’t, dear Erick;” and Erick kissed the scar, and told her he loved her all the better for it.

The water elves made a great festival when they heard this, and danced till morning.

“Anyhow, that is one good thing we have done in the past year,” they said. “We have cured Vain Lamorna.”



“Ah, a terrible thing is vanity!” said the Shawlpin solemnly. “I have suffered from it myself. I

26 *The Story of Vain Lamorna.*

make a point of pricking any one who I think is getting too vain."

"It rather depends on what one has to be vain of," said the Brooch. "Of course some people are vain of almost nothing."

"I like your story," said the Pin, "but I cannot say that I consider it natural."

"It is true, nevertheless," said the Brooch. "Now some one else must tell one. Perhaps the Shawl-pin will oblige us."

The Shawl-pin hesitated for some time, and then said he would try and remember a story which was told to him many years back by an Indian Scarf into which he was often stuck.

THE SEEDS OF LOVE.



ANY years ago, in a country far over the sea, was a little village standing by a great river ; and over the river was a bridge, with gates which

were opened and shut when carriages and horses went through. A little white cottage stood close beside the bridge, and in it lived an old woman and her two granddaughters, whose business it was to open and shut the heavy iron gates. The woman was very old, and her two granddaughters were the children of her two sons, who were both dead ; so the young girls were cousins. They were just the same age, but not the least alike. They were named Zaire and Blanchelys. Blanchelys

had gold-coloured hair, and eyes like blue corn-flowers, and she laughed and sang from morning till night. Zaire's hair was black as a raven's wing, and her eyes were like large sloes. She was called the prettiest girl in all the village, but no one loved her as they did the blue-eyed Blanchelys.

The old grandmother did nothing but sit by the fire and knit ; so one or other of the girls was always out attending to the gates and receiving the tolls of the passers-by. Zaire grumbled at the work, but Blanchelys did it cheerfully, and always said a pleasant word to each of the villagers as they came over the bridge.

One winter the old grandmother was feebler than ever, and on Christmas Eve she called the two girls to her bedside and said,—

“ My dear children, I feel that my end is now fast approaching, but before I die I have something to say to you both. I trust you will always be good girls, and then you are sure to be happy. I have little to leave you except my blessing, but there is something more I have for each of you. That is these two little candles ; they are magic candles, and when you set them alight there will appear to you a fairy who will grant you the wish

of your heart. If it is a good wish it will be a good fairy that appears, but if it is a wicked wish it will be a wicked fairy that comes ; so I advise you to beware, for bad fairies help none. You must burn your candles alone on a night when there is neither moon nor star, and you can only have one wish, for when that is granted the candle will burn out ; but if you will take my advice you will never light them at all. Many, many years ago they were brought over the sea, from a strange land where animals spoke and men and women flew, by a sailor who gave them to my grandmother, who gave them to my mother, who gave them to me. So I have had them all my life, but no one has ever used them, for we all thought that if people live honestly and do their duty, they are sure to be happy without the help of any fairy folk."

So saying the good woman drew from under her pillow two tiny candles, and gave one to each of the two girls, who stood by her bedside. They took them in great surprise, and Blanchelys stooped down and kissed her, and as she did so the old woman died.

Blanchelys grieved and wept much, for she had

loved her well, but Zaire was so busy thinking of her magic candle that she did not grieve for her grandmother's death, but sat brooding over what great thing she should wish for when she lit it.

"I will keep it till I know of something I long for very much indeed," she said to herself. So she put the candle safely away; and Blanchelys put hers away also, meaning to take her grandmother's advice, and never to light it. So the two girls lived in the same little cottage, going out as before to open the gates for the passers-by.

On the other side of the river was a grand castle which belonged to the King. Long ago he used to stay there to hunt, but now he was grown too old, and the castle was never used. One day the girls heard that the King's son was coming, and all the village was to be decorated in his honour. The first day he rode through it on his way to the hunt, Zaire and Blanchelys knew that he would cross the bridge; so they both dressed themselves in their very best to come out and open the gates; but Zaire said to Blanchelys, "You stand back, and let me go first, for, as people say I am the prettiest girl in the village, it is right I should be seen." So Blanchelys

stood behind and looked over her cousin's shoulder.

She saw the party of riders coming across the bridge, and they were all splendidly dressed in coloured velvets and gold, and in the middle, riding on a snow-white horse, was the King's son, clad in a suit of burnished gold, that sparkled and shone in the sunlight. His hair, which was darker and redder than his golden dress, hung over his shoulders and stood out around his head like fine wires. On his head was a velvet cap, from which hung a long white feather fastened down by a diamond clasp; and as he smiled and talked to those around him, Blanchelys thought she never had seen any one so beautiful in her life. In front of the party rode trumpeters, blowing on their trumpets, to clear the way, and behind were servants and pages leading hounds and bearing hawks.

But none of the party noticed the two girls who stood at the cottage door, and the horses' feet raised a cloud of dust, which flew into Zaire's face, and she fell into a passion. "If that is all one gets, forsooth, for opening the gate for the King's son," she cried, "I will never do it again." But Blanchelys stood at the door and watched the

party of horsemen till they were quite out of sight, and then she sighed. "I would stand at the gate all day if he would only ride by once," she said, and her cousin laughed at her scornfully. But when the royal party rode back, Blanchelys opened the gate, and stood and gazed at the King's son as before, and when she returned into the cottage she wept silently, and when she slept at night she dreamed of the King's son. Every day he came across the bridge on his snow-white horse as he rode to the hunt, and every day Blanchelys came out and opened the gates and gazed on his face; but he never noticed her, and she sighed as she turned again to the cottage. So the days passed, and Blanchelys grew thin and pale. Zaire laughed at her, and asked what ailed her. "If you lose all your good looks like that," she said, "you will never get a husband."

"I want no husband whom I shall ever wed," said Blanchelys sadly; and at that Zaire laughed the more.

One night when Zaire was sleeping soundly Blanchelys, who had lain awake all night, rose out of her little bed, and stepping softly to the window, looked out at the night. There were

neither moon nor stars, and the night was very dark.

"I must be quick," said Blanchelys, "for soon the sun will rise."

So she dressed herself quickly, but she left her hair hanging down her back, and trod noiselessly to the cupboard, and softly opened the door. She took out the candle, and hid it in her bosom. Then she crept from the room, down the passage, and into the little garden. In the middle of the garden stood a great yew-tree, whose branches almost touched the ground. It looked like a great black giant in the night, and Blanchelys trembled as she looked at it; but she summoned her courage, and going up to the tree crept under its branches, and knelt down, leaning against the trunk. It was black, black night, but not a breeze was blowing, and it was as hot as if the sun was shining. Blanchelys stuck her candle firmly in the ground, and then lit it. Directly it began to burn, there came a little rustling sound through the trees like the flapping of doves' wings, and then in front of where Blanchelys knelt, in the light of the candle she saw a boy, who was not like any one she had ever seen

before, so beautiful was he. He had curly golden hair, which spread round his head like a halo, and



he wore on his hair a wreath of pink roses, and he carried a branch of roses in his hand. His robe was white, but it did not hide his bare feet,

on which were golden sandals; and a golden girdle was round his waist. From his shoulders grew soft pink wings, and his face was as beautiful as an angel's.

"I am Love. What do you want with me?" said the boy; and at the sound of his voice all the wood-doves in the neighbouring trees awoke and began to coo. But Blanchelys trembled and looked at him in silence; and he spoke again,—

"Speak quickly—tell me what is your heart's wish, for soon your candle will have burnt out, and then I shall vanish." Then Blanchelys summoned all her courage, and clasping her hands, said in a low, trembling voice,—

"Give me the love of the King's son."

Love looked at her for a moment, and he smiled and laughed low to himself; then he gently shook the branch of roses he carried, and into his hand from the heart of the roses fell some tiny seeds.

"Take them," he said, holding them out to Blanchelys, "and plant them in the earth just as the sun is rising; but ere you cover them up breathe over them the name of him whose love you desire. From them will spring a rose-tree,

and as it grows so his love for you will grow. While that tree lives he will love you more than all the world, but should it pine and die his love for you would wane and die also, and then only one thing in the world would make it live again. And beware of one thing, that is the prick of the thorns which grow upon the tree ; for should one pierce your skin, and draw the blood, be it never so little, the wound will never heal, even if it do not kill you. Farewell, and see that you guard well your tree."

"Stay for one moment," entreated Blanchelys. "Tell me how and where I should seek you if I want to find you."

"I am to be found in many places," answered Love. "But I am often where you would never seek me, and seldom where you would look for me. Farewell!" And again there was a soft whirring of wings, and in a moment Love had disappeared, and the light from the candle died out, and Blanchelys was left alone under the tree in the dark night. The wood-doves stopped cooing, and all was still again. Then she rose from her knees, and turned into the house. She could not see the seeds in the darkness, but she

grasped them firmly in one hand as she crept again into her little bed. Zaire moved in her sleep, but she did not wake.

As the first rays of the sun began to shine, Blanchelys arose again, and examined her seeds. They were more like jewels than seeds, for they were bright clear red, like rubies, and each one was in the form of a heart. Blanchelys kissed them, and then she sought about for a spot in which to sow them. At last she took a flower-pot and filled it with earth, and in it laid the seeds, and breathed over them the name of the King's son, and covered them over with earth. Then she put the flower-pot in the window of her room. "Now I can watch it both night and day," she said, "and see that no harm comes to it."

That morning, when the King's son rode past to the hunt, he stopped at the cottage door, and asked Blanchelys to give him a glass of water. It was the first time he had ever spoken to her, and her heart beat high with joy. At night, when she went to look at her flower-pot, she found that a tiny shoot was appearing above the earth in the pot.

Next day as the Prince rode past he stopped again at the cottage, and every day he stopped and spoke with Blanchelys, and every day stayed with her a longer time ; and the plant in the pot grew larger and larger, till at last Blanchelys saw that it was a rose-tree, and that it was covered with tiny buds.

One evening, when the Prince came back from hunting, he came into the cottage with Blanchelys, and asked her if she would be his wife, and told her that when he was King she should be Queen.

Blanchelys wept for joy ; and when she went to look at her flower she found that one of the buds had burst into a splendid white rose, which scented the whole room.

So Blanchelys married the King's son, and there were great rejoicings at the wedding all over the country, and illuminations everywhere ; and Blanchelys had fine ladies to wait on her, and beautiful jewels given to her, and fine dresses made for her ; but what she valued more than all was her pot with the rose-tree in it, which grew more and more beautiful every day, for fresh roses bloomed.

But Zaire was bitterly jealous of Blanchelys,

because she was going to be Queen, though Blanchelys was very kind to her and gave her beautiful things, and took her to live with her at the palace. Still Zaire hated her, and thought night and day of how she could do her any harm, and as she saw how happy Blanchelys was, and how much her husband loved her, she hated her all the more. So the time passed on. Blanchelys' rose had grown into a big tree, and she had planted it in the palace garden, just beneath her bedroom window, so that it might be the first thing she saw when she woke in the morning. All her ladies knew that Princess Blanchelys' favourite spot in the palace garden was close to the beautiful rose-tree, where she would sit for hours gazing up at its flowers and smelling them. She never allowed any one to gather them, and she always watered it herself. Her first care in the morning was to examine her rose-tree, whilst she brushed from it all insects, and cut off the dead leaves. And sometimes, when no one was there to see, she would press her lips to the roses ; but Zaire watched her secretly, and longed to know why Blanchelys loved the tree so much.

After a time, Blanchelys had a little son, who

was heir to the crown, and she was even happier than before, and her husband loved her better. The bells were rung at the birth of the prince, and all the people rejoiced. And the rose-tree grew so fast, that when Blanchelys came out into the garden, with her baby in her arms, it was quite a big tree, and she was able to stand under the shade of its branches.

"You are a very happy woman, cousin Blanchelys," said Zaire, coming up to her from behind, as she stood under the tree.

"Yes, indeed, I am happy," said Blanchelys, looking at the baby in her arms. "And I hope, dear cousin Zaire, that you will be as happy as I am."

"That is impossible," said Zaire, "for one day you will be Queen, and I never shall."

"I am not so happy because I am going to be Queen," said Blanchelys, "but because I love my husband and baby so dearly."

"And, next to them, what do you love best?" asked Zaire.

"Next to them, I love my rose-tree," said Blanchelys; and she laughed, and wound her arms round the tree-trunk.

"Then if that tree were to die, would you be

very unhappy, cousin Blanchelys?" asked Zaire, and her eyes glittered eagerly.

"Yes, if my tree were to die, I think it would break my heart," said Blanchelys, and she turned quite pale at the thought.

But from that day Zaire thought of nothing but how she could kill the rose-tree that her cousin loved so much. First she pulled off its leaves, and cut its branches, but fresh leaves grew in the old ones' places, and the maimed branches budded and sprouted anew. Then she took a sharp knife, and pierced it through the trunk, and peeled off the bark, so that it bled. But the gash soon healed up, and the bark grew again, so that the tree was finer than before. Zaire might do what she could, but the tree grew and grew, and she could not hurt it.

Soon after the baby prince was born the old King fell ill and died, so Blanchelys and her husband were to be crowned King and Queen. Again the country was illuminated for the coronation, and Blanchelys and her husband sat on two golden thrones while the crowns were placed on their heads, and the baby lay in a golden cradle at their feet.

Queen Blanchelys was dressed in white satin and gold, with some of her dear roses in her dress, and she smiled and wept for joy ; and all the crowd cheered and shouted. But when Zaire saw Blanchelys seated on her golden throne, her hatred and envy knew no bounds, and she wept with rage ; for she saw that Blanchelys was better and fairer than she, though she too wore a grand satin dress, and had jewels in her hair.

At night a great ball was given in the palace ; but Zaire would not dance, and stood in a corner watching Blanchelys, her lips trembling with rage. At last she started up with a thought in her mind, and ran into the palace garden, in the dark night. In one hand she held tightly grasped the little wax candle her grandmother had given her long before. The night was dark and cold, there were neither moon nor stars, and a shrill wind whistled, and Zaire shivered and trembled in her yellow satin dress. The rain began to fall, but she lifted her skirts and picked her way among the puddles in her thin shining shoes till she came to where stood Blanchelys' rose-tree.

Here she stopped, and taking the candle, planted it firmly in the ground and lit it. The

wind blew and the rain fell, but the candle burnt on steadily. All at once there was the sound of a hiss like a serpent's hiss, and in front of Zaire was the ugly figure of a grizzly hag clothed in black. Round her head she wore a crown of twisted living snakes, who moved their heads and spit venom on all sides. In her hand, which was more like a claw than a hand, she carried a staff, round which twined a snake who had seven heads, the first a serpent's, the second a monkey's, the third a toad's, the fourth a vulture's, the fifth a tiger's, and the sixth and seventh a man's and a woman's; and all the heads hissed and chattered and spit and shrieked with anger. About her feet crawled frogs and toads and loathsome reptiles of all sorts, but most hideous of all was her face, for it was so seamed and wrinkled with rage and anger that it looked more like a fiend's than a woman's.

"What do you want with me?" she hissed in a voice that made Zaire tremble. "Speak—what is your wish?"

Then Zaire pointed to the rose-tree, and said, "Tell me how to kill that tree."

The hag chuckled, and drew from her bosom a

small viper, which she held out to Zaire, who trembled still more, but took it in her hand and held it, though it was as cold as stone and very slimy.

“Take that,” croaked the witch, “and dig to the roots of the rose-tree. Lay it among them and it will twist around them, and as it tightens its hold so shall the tree die.”

“Who are you, and what is your name?” gasped Zaire.

“I am Envy,” answered the hag; and then again Zaire heard a long low hiss, and the old woman had disappeared and left her alone still holding the cold slimy viper. At once she returned to the palace, and took it to a light when no one was watching her. It was bright green, and glittered as it moved. Its eyes were flaming scarlet, and from its mouth came a long forked tongue, and it hissed spitefully, but it did not attempt to hurt Zaire, and she kissed and caressed it, then hiding it in her bosom went back to dance at the ball.

Next morning, as was her wont, Queen Blanchelys came down with the baby in her arms to her rose-tree, and Zaire stepped out from behind the tree and watched her as before.

"Ah, my sweet tree, each day you are more beautiful, and I am happier," said Queen Blanchelys, and she put her white arms round the tree-trunk and laid her cheek against it and caressed it as before.

"Your pet seems well, cousin Blanchelys," said Zaire, coming to where she stood.

"What! are you there, cousin Zaire?" said Blanchelys, drawing back from the tree.

"And see, I have also a new pet," said Zaire; and she drew from her bosom the cold long snake, and let it twist about her arms and throat.

"What hideous creature have you there, cousin Zaire?" cried Blanchelys, trembling and hiding her eyes from the snake.

"You have a pet, why should I not have one also?" said Zaire, as she kissed the snake's glittering green head.

"But you will surely not make a pet of that dreadful snake?" said Blanchelys. "Dear cousin Zaire, throw it away, and I will give you a beautiful pet—a dove, or a gazelle, or a rose-tree like mine."

"I would not change my snake for anything in all the wide world," said Zaire; and her eyes

glittered, almost like the snake's own, as she turned away still fondling it; but Queen Blanchelys shuddered, and felt very sad, though she knew not why.

Zaire waited till night, and then she took a spade and went into the garden to dig at the roots of the rose-tree. It was quite dark, and no one could see her. She dug and dug till she came to the long deep roots that went far into the earth, and then she stood on the ground beside the hole and took the snake from her bosom and kissed it.

"Pretty snake," she said softly, "tighten about the roots of the tree, and kill it as quickly as you can, that it may die and cousin Blanchelys may mourn."

Then she took the snake in her little white hand and placed it among the tree's roots. For a moment it lay quite still, then it began to coil itself slowly about them, and to twist itself round and round them.

Zaire laughed as she watched it. "Good-bye, sweet snake," she said; "do your work well." Then she filled up the hole with earth and smoothed the top so that no one should see.

Next day when Queen Blanchelys came to look at her tree she found it drooping, so she called to the gardeners to give it water, but not all the water in the world could refresh it, and each day it drooped more and more, and the flowers began to die and fall away. Poor Queen Blanchelys watched it with tears in her eyes. She sent for gardeners from far and near, but they could do nothing for it, and the Queen was sick at heart, and grew pale and thin, for she knew that her husband was beginning to love her less and less.



Every day he rode out hunting with Zaire, and at all the Court balls he danced with no one else. Queen Blanchelys mourned in silence till the last leaf fell from her tree.

“Now I will stay here no longer,” she said, “since my tree is dead and my husband no longer loves me. I will go and find Love, and ask him to help me.” So she rose in the night, and wrapped herself in a large cloak, and said good-bye to her baby, and started alone.

She wandered and wandered and wandered till she came to the village where she was born, and to the little house by the bridge where she had lived.

She went into the garden where the yew-tree stood, and where she had seen Love before, but no Love was there now, and when she asked the neighbours if he had passed that way they stared at her and thought her mad. So she went on and on, night and day, till her feet were sore and her face burnt with the sun. She was so weary that she could scarcely walk, but still she pressed on, looking everywhere for Love, but seeing him nowhere. At last she came to a church in which a grand wedding was taking

place. "Here shall I surely find him," she said, and she quickened her steps, and went into the church and sat down among the people. She waited till the wedding was over, and then watched the bridal procession coming out to see if Love was amongst them. The bride was grandly dressed, and there were many smart carriages and finely dressed people, but nowhere amongst them did she see the figure of Love, and she turned from the church with a heavy heart. As she went along the road, she came to a large tree under which sat a couple of lovers courting. "Ah, here will Love surely be," she said, and she drew near the tree, and stood silently watching the young people as they whispered and laughed together; but Love was not there, and Queen Blanchelys sought him in vain. Then she went on again till she came to a green, on which were playing a number of children.

"Now among these little ones shall I find him," she said, and she waited and looked on at their games, but still she saw no trace of Love. So she went on and on and on, till she was so weary that she could toil no farther, and stopped on a desolate barren plain on which stood a few

miserable cottages, and near them an old church and churchyard. Close by, the sea roared loud, and wild sea-birds flew all about. Queen Blanchelys dropped exhausted on a little mound in front of a cottage door, and overheard two women who were talking together as they sat spinning.

“He made her work for him day and night,” said one, “and never gave her a kind word.”

“He beat and kicked her,” said the other; “it’s very well for her that he is dead.”

“They are beginning to toll the bell for the funeral now,” said the first, “but there’ll be very few mourners there, I expect. He was the wickedest man for miles round.”

Then Queen Blanchelys looked across to the church, and heard the bell tolling, and saw a small dark procession winding towards the churchyard.

She raised herself from the ground and turned towards the churchyard.

“Poor woman! she is unhappy; so am I,” she said with tears in her eyes.

The priest was already reading the service beside the grave when she reached it. Only one woman stood beside it, but when she looked at

her, Queen Blanchelys' heart beat high, for close by her was Love dressed as a mourner. She waited till the service was over, and the woman and the priest had turned away, and then she sprang forward and caught Love by the cloak, and sank at his feet.

"Help me, sweet Love!" she cried, and then began to weep.

"Poor Queen Blanchelys!" said Love, "your rose-tree is dead, then." His face looked sad, and his cheeks were pale and thin.

"My tree is dead," sobbed Queen Blanchelys, "and the King loves me no more. Ah, tell me who has killed my tree?"

"Your cousin Zaire has killed it," said Love. "She asked Envy to help her, and Envy has given her a viper, which she laid at the tree's roots, and it has spat its deadly venom on to the red heart which is in the centre of the trunk and killed it."

"Tell me, then, how to make it live again," gasped the Queen.

"There is only one thing in the world that can do that!" said Love.

"And what is that?" asked the Queen.

“The blood from your own heart,” said Love. “You must pierce your heart with a thorn from the tree, and let it flow to the tree’s roots. Then, when it touches the snake it will shrivel and die, and the tree will bloom out afresh.”

When Queen Blanchelys heard this she turned very pale, but she rose and left the churchyard, and turned homeward. She walked for many days, for it was far to the palace, and as she drew near to it she saw that it was all decorated with flags as if for some great rejoicing. So she stopped and asked a countrywoman what it was for.

“You must indeed be a stranger, that you do not know that,” answered the good woman. “Tomorrow the King marries the Princess Zaire, the late Queen’s cousin. Queen Blanchelys has now been dead many years, so to-morrow the marriage will take place, and all the decorations are in honour of the wedding.”

Then Queen Blanchelys asked the woman if the late Queen had not left a little son, and where it now was.

“It is always with the King, and he is so fond of it, that people say Princess Zaire is jealous of

it, and would send it away if she dared," said the woman.

Queen Blanchelys thanked her and then sat down by the roadside, and waited till night came and every one was asleep in bed. Then she rose and stole quietly into the palace, when no one heard her, and first she took a piece of paper, and on it she wrote how she had gone away because the King did not love her, and how Love had told her that Zaire had killed her rose-tree from jealousy, and had stolen the King's love, and she prayed that the King would be good to her little son when she was dead, and that she might be buried under her rose-tree. Then she went upstairs, and first she went to the bedside of her cousin Zaire. "Ah, cruel cousin Zaire," she said, "I have never hurt you. Why did you hate me so? But you shall never be Queen, in my place, though you are dreaming it now."

Then she went to the bedside of her little son, and she kissed him and fondled him, but she did not wake him.

"Ah, little son," she said, "if I had not come home to-night, to-morrow you would have had a cruel step-mother in my place, but now you will

never have any step-mother, and your father will always love you well."

Then last of all she went to the bedside of her husband the King, and laid her letter on the pillow, close by his head.

"Alas! dear husband," she said, "to-night I am looking at you, and you do not see me, but to-morrow morning you will be looking at me, when I shall not see you."

Then she kissed him softly thrice, and bid him adieu, and went out of the palace to her dear rose-tree in the garden. It was nothing now but a bare black stump. So Queen Blanchelys lay down on the ground, and put her arms round the trunk, and from the dead branch she tore a long smooth thorn, and pierced her heart with it, and the drops of blood trickled to the roots of the tree, and at once the serpent at the roots shrivelled and died, and the tree again began to bud and sprout.

When the King woke in the morning the first thing he saw was the Queen's letter, and he took it and read it at once, and as he read his cheeks turned pale, and he sighed bitterly, and then he called his courtiers, and told them what had happened, and they all went out into the garden

to the rose-tree, under which lay poor Queen Blanchelys dead. But the tree which before was only a piece of dead wood was covered with green leaves and rose-buds.

The King kissed the Queen's pale face, and ordered that there should be a grand funeral, and that she should be buried under her rose-tree, and from that day forth the King thought of no one but Queen Blanchelys, and each day sat by her grave under her rose-tree ; but Zaire was stripped of all her fine dresses and jewels, and had the clothes which she wore before she came to the palace, and was banished from the land, and had to beg her bread from door to door.

But when the rose-tree burst into bloom, the roses, which were white before, were as red as the blood which sprang from the Queen's heart, and which had coloured them.

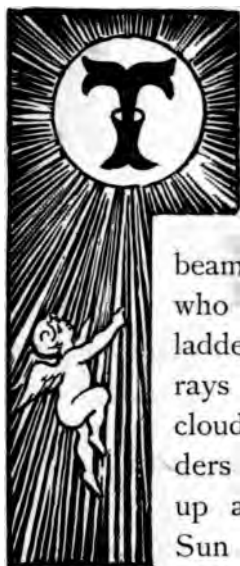
“ Now I call that an uncomfortable story,” said the Brooch, in rather a husky voice. “ For my part, I like stories that end up all right.”

The Pin did not speak, for it was crying quietly, and was dreadfully ashamed of its tears being seen. Even the Bracelets had stopped chattering, and come down to listen. The Shawl-pin smiled. He felt his story had been a success, so he did not mind what the Brooch said.

“Now it is your turn,” said the Brooch to the Pin, who, after thinking a little, said he would tell them a story once told him by an Opal Ring he knew, when he asked how it came by its wonderful colours.



THE STORY OF THE OPAL.



THE Sun was shining brightly one hot summer day, and a little Sunbeam slid down his long golden ladder, and crept unperceived under the leaves of a large tree. All the Sunbeams are in reality tiny Sun-fairies, who run down to earth on golden ladders, which look to mortals like rays of the Sun. When they see a cloud coming they climb their ladders in an instant, and draw them up after them into the Sun. The Sun is ruled by a mighty fairy, who every morning tells his tiny servants, the beams, where they are to shine, and every evening counts them on their return, to see he has the right number. It is not known, but the Sun and Moon are enemies, and that is why

they never shine at the same time. The fairy of the Moon is a woman, and all her beams are tiny women, who come down on the loveliest little ladders, like threads of silver. No one knows why the Sun and Moon quarrelled. Once they were very good friends. Some say it is because the Sun wished to marry her, and she did not like him, but preferred a sea king, for whose sake she always keeps near the world. Others think it is because of a piece of land which the Moon claimed as her own, and on which the Sun one day shone so strongly that he dried up and killed all the plants and grass there, which offended the Moon very much. Anyhow, it remains that they are bitter enemies, and the Sunbeams and Moonbeams may not play together.

On the day on which my story begins, the Sunbeam about whom I am going to tell you crept into a tree, and sat down near a Bullfinch's nest, and watched the Bullfinch and its mate.

"Why should I not have a mate also?" he said to himself; and then he began to feel very sad, for the Sunbeams never mate. Yet he was the prettiest little fellow you could imagine. His hair was bright gold, and he sat still, leaning one

arm on his tiny ladder, and listening to the chatter of the birds.

"But I shall try to keep awake to-night to see her," said a young Bullfinch.

"Nonsense!" said its mother. "You shall do no such thing."

"But the Nightingale says she is so very lovely," said a Wren, looking out from her little nest in a hedge close by.

"The Nightingale!" said the old Bullfinch, scornfully. "Every one knows that the Nightingale was moonstruck long ago. Who can trust a word he says?"

"Nevertheless, I should like to see her," said the Wren.

"I have seen her, and the Nightingale is right," said a Wood-dove in its soft, cooing tones. "I was awake last night and saw her; she is more lovely than anything that ever came here before."

"Of whom are you talking?" asked the Sunbeam; and he shot across to the Bullfinch's nest. All the birds were silent when they saw him. At last the Bullfinch said, "Only of a Moonbeam, your Highness. No one your Highness would

care about," for the Bullfinch remembered the quarrel between the Sun and Moon, and did not like to say much.

"What is she like?" asked the Sunbeam. "I have never seen a Moonbeam."

"I have seen her, and she is as beautiful as an



angel," said the Wood-dove. "But you should ask the Nightingale. He knows more about her than any one, for he always comes out to sing to her."

"Where is the Nightingale?" asked the Sunbeam.

"He is resting now," said the Wren, "and will

not say a word. But later, as the Sun begins to set, he will come out and tell you."

"At the time when all decent birds are going to roost," grumbled the Bullfinch.

"I will wait till the Nightingale comes," said the Sunbeam.

So all day long he shone about the tree. As the Sun moved slowly down, his ladder dropped with it lower and lower, for it was fastened to the Sun at one end; and if he had allowed the Sun to disappear before he had run back and drawn it up, the ladder would have broken against the earth, and the poor little Sunbeam could never have gone home again, but would have wandered about, becoming paler and paler every minute, till at last he died.

But some time before the Sun had gone, when it was still shining in a glorious bed of red and gold, the Nightingale arose, and, coming forth from his concealment, began to sing loud and clear.

"Oh, is it you at last?" said the Sunbeam. "How I have waited for you. Tell me quickly about this Moonbeam of whom they are all talking."

"What shall I tell you of her?" sang the Nightingale. "She is more beautiful than the rose. She is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. Her hair is silver, and the light of her eyes is far more lovely than yours. But why should you want to know about her? You belong to the Sun, and hate Moonbeams."

"I do not hate them," said the Sunbeam sadly. "What are they like? Show this one to me some night, dear Nightingale."

"I cannot show her to you now," answered the Nightingale; "for she will not come out till long after the Sun has set; but wait a few days, and when the Moon is full she will come a little before the Sun sets, and if you hide beneath a leaf you may look at her. But you must promise not to shine on her, or you might hurt her, or break her ladder."

"I will promise," said the Sunbeam, and every day he came back to the same tree at sunset, to talk to the Nightingale about the Moonbeam, till the Bullfinch was quite angry.

"To-night I shall see her at last," he said to himself, for the Moon was almost full, and would rise before the Sun had set. He hid in the oak-leaves, trembling with expectation.

"She is coming!" said the Nightingale, and the Sunbeam peeped out from the branches, and watched. In a minute or two a tiny silver ladder like a thread was placed among the leaves, near the Nightingale's nest, and down it came the Moonbeam, and our little Sunbeam looked out and saw her.

She did not at all look as he had expected she would, but he agreed with the Nightingale that she was the loveliest thing he had ever seen. She was all silver, and pale greeny blue. Her hair and eyes shone like stars. All the Sunbeams looked bright, and hot, but she looked as cool as the sea; yet she glittered like a diamond. The Sunbeam gazed at her in surprise, unable to say a word, till all at once he saw that his little ladder was bending. The Sun was sinking, and he had only just time to scramble back, and draw his ladder after him.

The Moonbeam only saw his light vanishing, and did not see him.

"To whom were you talking, dear Nightingale?" she asked, putting her beautiful white arms round his neck, and leaning her head on his bosom.

"To a Sunbeam," answered the Nightingale. "Ah, how beautiful he is! I was telling him about you. He longs to see you."

"I have never seen a Sunbeam," said the Moonbeam, wistfully. "I should like to see one so much;" and all night long she sat close beside the Nightingale, with her head leaning on his breast, whilst he sang to her of the Sunbeam; and his song was so loud and clear that it awoke the Bullfinch, who flew into a rage, and declared that if it went on any longer she would speak to the Owl about it, and have it stopped. For the Owl was chief judge, and always ate the little birds when they did not behave themselves.

But the Nightingale never ceased, and the Moonbeam listened till the tears rose in her eyes and her lips quivered.

"To-night, then, I shall see him," whispered the Moonbeam, as she kissed the Nightingale, and bid him adieu.

"And to-night he will see you," said the Nightingale, as he settled to rest among the leaves.

All that next day was cloudy, and the Sun did not shine, but towards evening the clouds passed

away and the Sun came forth, and no sooner had it appeared than the Nightingale saw our Sunbeam's ladder placed close to his nest, and in an instant the Sunbeam was beside him.

"Dear, dear Nightingale," he said caressingly, "you are right. She is more lovely than the dawn. I have thought of her all night and all day. Tell me, will she come again to-night? I will wait to see her."

"Yes, she will come, and you may speak to her, but you must not touch her," said the Nightingale; and then they were silent and waited.

Underneath the oak-tree lay a large white Stone, a common white Stone, neither beautiful nor useful, for it lay there where it had fallen, and bitterly lamented that it had no object in life. It never spoke to the birds, who scarcely knew it could speak; but sometimes, if the Nightingale lighted upon it, and touched it with his soft breast, or the Moonbeam shone upon it, it felt as if it would break with grief that it should be so stupid and useless. It watched the Sunbeams and Moonbeams come down on their ladders, and wondered that none of the birds but the Nightingale thought the Moonbeam beautiful. That

evening, as the Sunbeam sat waiting, the Stone watched it eagerly, and when the Moonbeam placed her tiny ladder among the leaves, and slid down it, it listened to all that was said.

At first the Moonbeam did not speak, for she did not see the Sunbeam, but she came close to the Nightingale, and kissed it as usual.

"Have you seen him again?" she asked. And, on hearing this, the Sunbeam shot out from among the green leaves, and stood before her.

For a few minutes she was silent; then she began to shiver and sob, and drew nearer to the Nightingale, and if the Sunbeam tried to approach her, she climbed up her ladder, and went farther still.

"Do not be frightened, dearest Moonbeam," cried he piteously; "I would not, indeed, do you any harm, you are so very lovely, and I love you so much."

The Moonbeam turned away sobbing.

"I do not want you to love me," she said, "for if you touch me I shall die. It would have been much better for you not to have seen me; and now I cannot go back and be happy in the Moon, for I shall be always thinking of you."

"Could it have been better not to love, as I love you? I do not care if I die or not, now that I have seen you; and see," said the Sunbeam sadly, "my end is sure, for the Sun is fast sinking, and I shall not return to it, I shall stay with you."

"Go, while you have time," cried the Moonbeam. But even as she spoke the Sun sank beneath the horizon, and the tiny gold ladder of the Sunbeam broke with a snap, and the two sides fell to earth and melted away.

"See," said the Sunbeam, "I cannot return now, neither do I wish it. I will remain here with you till I die."

"No, no," cried the Moonbeam. "Oh, I shall have killed you! What shall I do? And look, there are clouds drifting near the Moon; if one of them floats across my ladder it will break it. But I cannot go and leave you here;" and she leaned across the leaves to where the Sunbeam sat, and looked into his eyes. But the Nightingale saw that a tiny white cloud was sailing close by the Moon—a little cloud no bigger than a spot of white wool, but quite big and strong enough to break the Moonbeam's little ladder.

"Go, go at once. See! your ladder will break,"

he sang to her ; but she did not notice him, but sat watching the Sunbeam sadly. For a moment the Moon's light was obscured, as the tiny cloud sailed past it ; then the little silver ladder fell to earth, broken in two and shrunk away ; but the Moonbeam did not heed it.

"It does not matter," she said, "for I should never have gone back and left you here, now that I have seen you."

So all night long they sat together in the oak-tree, and the Nightingale sang to them, and the other birds grumbled that he kept them awake. But the two were very happy, though the Sunbeam knew he was growing paler every moment, for he could not live twenty-four hours away from the Sun.

When the dawn began to appear, the Moonbeam shivered and trembled.

"The strong Sun," she said, "would kill me, but I fear something even worse than the Sun. See how heavy the clouds are ! Surely it is going to rain, and rain would kill us both at once. Oh, where can we look for shelter before it comes ?"

The Sunbeam looked up, and saw that the rain was coming.

"Come," he said, "let us go;" and they wandered out into the forest, and sought for a sheltering place, but every moment they grew weaker.

When they were gone, the Stone looked up at the Nightingale and said,—

"Oh, why did they go? I like to hear them



talk, and they are so pretty; they can find no shelter out there, and they will die at once. See! in my side there is a large hole where it is quite dark, and into which no rain can come. Fly after them and tell them to come; that I will shelter them." So the Nightingale spread his wings, and flew singing,—

"Come back, come back ! The Stone will shelter you. Come back at once before the rain falls."

They had wandered out into an open field, but when she heard the Nightingale, the Moonbeam turned her head and said,—

"Surely that is the Nightingale singing. See ! he is calling us."

"Follow me," sang the bird. "Back at once to shelter in the Stone." But the Moonbeam tottered and fell.

"I am grown so weak and pale," she said, "I can no longer move."

Then the Nightingale flew to earth. "Climb upon my back," he said, "and I will take you both back to the Stone." So they both sat upon his back, and he flew with them to the large Stone beneath the tree.

"Go in," he said, stopping in front of the hole ; and both passed into the hole, and nestled in the darkness within the Stone.

Then the rain began. All day long it rained, and the Nightingale sat in his nest half asleep. But when the Moon rose, after the Sun had set, the clouds cleared away, and the air was again full of tiny silver ladders, down which the Moon-

beams came, but the Nightingale looked in vain for his own particular Moonbeam. He knew she could not shine on him again, therefore he mourned, and sang a sorrowful song. Then he



flew down to the Stone, and sang a song at the mouth of the hole, but there came no answer. So he looked down the hole, into the Stone, but there was no trace of the Sunbeam or the Moonbeam—only one shining spot of light, where they had rested. Then the Nightingale knew that they had faded away and died.

“They could not live away from the Sun and Moon,” he said. “Still, I wish I had never told the Sunbeam of her beauty; then she would be here

now." So all night long he sang his saddest songs, and told their story again and again.

When the Bullfinch heard of it she was quite pleased. "Now, at last," she said, "we shall hear the end of the Moonbeam. I am heartily glad, for I was sick of her."

"How much they must have loved each other!" said the Dove. "I am glad at least that they died together," and she cooed sadly.

But through the Stone wherein the beams had sheltered, shot up bright beautiful rays of light, silver and gold. They coloured it all over with every colour of the rainbow, and when the Sun or Moon warmed it with their light it became quite brilliant. So that the Stone, from being the ugliest thing in the whole forest, became the most beautiful.

Men found it and called it the Opal. But the Nightingale knew that it was the Sunbeam and Moonbeam who, in dying, had suffused the Stone with their mingled colours and light; and the Nightingale will never forget them, for every night he sings their story, and that is why his song is so sad.

"I like that kind of story," said the Brooch ;
"it is instructive as well as amusing. Now we
know why the Opal has changing colours."

"I cannot bring myself to believe anything so
improbable," said the Shawl-pin, scornfully. "I
have known a great number of Opals, and they
never told me any such thing."

"Do you dispute my word?" said the Pin,
fiercely, and a quarrel was just going to begin
when a hand descended on the Pincushion, and
taking up the Shawl-pin and Brooch, bore them
both away.

"Shawl-pins are always quarrelsome," said the
Pin to itself, "and my story was the best after
all." And then, having nothing else to do, it went
to sleep.



END OF ON A PINCUSHION.



SIEGFRID AND HANDA.



ON the border of a large forest there once stood a little village, where all the people were happy, for they were all good and industrious and honest. It was the pleasantest little village in the world. No fevers or illnesses ever came near it. The people died only of old age, and all the children were well grown and strong. The villagers never quarrelled with each other, but lived as peacefully as the flowers in the forest. Now, there was an old proverb about the place, which said that as long as the people were honest and hardworking, and never quarrelled or were

greedy or avaricious, no troubles should come near them, but that heavy misfortune would fall on them directly they forgot to behave well. The children in this village were as happy as their parents, but perhaps the happiest child of all was little Siegfrid, the shoemaker's little son. He had no brothers or sisters, but he never felt lonely, for he played with the miller's little daughter Handa, who was just his own age, and as pretty a little maiden as you would wish to see. Siegfrid's father, Ralph, was the only shoemaker in the village, and made shoes and boots for all the people. Once a year each one would come to him and say, "Ralph, I want a new pair of shoes, and be sure you make them as good as the last." So Ralph had plenty to do, but he took a long time making each pair, for he always wanted them to be well made, and would have been ashamed if he had been told that they had worn out before their time or did not fit well.

His father meant to teach little Siegfrid his trade, and that he should be village shoemaker after him; and when he was grown up Siegfrid meant to marry Handa, and already the villagers, when they saw the children walking hand in hand

to and from school, as they did every day, laughed and said, "There go Siegfried and his little wife."

The forest near was full of birds and animals, and as the villagers never hunted or hurt them in any way, they had grown quite tame. The birds would fly down from the branches and sit upon the shoulders of the passers-by, or flutter round their heads singing. The squirrels sat still and let any one stroke them, and even the timid hares came and gently rubbed themselves against the children's legs and feet, with no more fear of them than a pussy cat would have had; in fact, the animals in the forest were as peaceful and happy as the men and women in the village.

One day there came along the high road a queer little old man—an ugly-looking man—with small eyes and a peaked cap on his head. On his back he carried a heavy pack like a pedlar's. When he got into the village he stopped and began to undo it, whilst all the children stood round him staring. Every one who passed stopped and looked at him, for it was very unusual for any stranger to come to the village. Then the old man took some poles and a board, which he had

carried on his back also, and with them he made a stall, which he placed by the roadside. Then he undid his pack and took from it a number of boots and shoes, which he placed on the stall, and then sat down himself on a little stool behind it.

All the children gathered round the stall to look, for never had they seen such a number of boots and shoes together before. There were big ones and little ones, blue, green, red, yellow, violet, every colour—some with bows and rosettes, others quite plain. And all had their prices marked on them; and oh! how cheap they were! The boots and shoes Ralph made cost three times as much.

After a time the old man began to sing :—

“Come, buy! come, buy!
Shoes for all.
Who’ll try? who’ll try?”

“Red shoes and blue shoes,
Black shoes and white shoes,
Thick shoes and thin shoes,
Strong shoes and light shoes.”

But the villagers all passed on, and only laughed as they looked back at the stall, and said, “We

don't want him here. We have Ralph to make our boots and shoes, and he does quite well for us." So no customers came to the old man that day, and when night came he quietly packed up his wares and took his stall to pieces, and went his way. But the first thing next morning there he was again putting up his stall and covering it with boots and shoes. Every day for many weeks he came and sat by the roadside, in exactly the same spot, singing the same rhyme, and still no one went near him to buy his goods, and the children grew so used to him that they no longer stopped to stare at him.

But one day a young girl named Lisbeth, the daughter of the baker, came near the stall, and looked at a pair of red shoes, with pretty buckles, and the old man looked at her, but did not say a word. Then she turned away, but she felt the money in her pocket as she walked, and she looked back at the shoes, and the old man nodded and chuckled to himself as he watched her. Next morning she came again, but this time she took up the shoes in her hand, and examined them well ; she turned them about a little, and then she put them down and walked away as before ; but in the

evening she came back, and took them up again, and this time she did not lay them down, but took out her money, and paid the old man for them, and then ran away, hiding the shoes under her apron, for she was rather afraid of being laughed at for having bought shoes of the old man. At once she took them to her greatest friend, who was a girl named Alys. "Look at these pretty pink shoes," she said. "I have just bought them of the old man at the stall, and they only cost five silver pennies. See how pretty they are!" Alys looked at them and said, "It is true they are very pretty, but I don't think they will wear well; however, as they are so very cheap, that does not much matter. I wonder if he has another pair just like them, that I could buy."

So Lisbeth and Alys went back to the stall, and Alys bought a pair of shoes just like Lisbeth's; and then they both went to show them to the other young girls in the village, and one by one each said she would have a pair for herself, till there was not a girl who was not wearing the old man's shoes. Then the women began. If they were so cheap, they said, why should they not buy them too? They were not bound to buy only Ralph's

goods. So after a time all the women had bought boots for themselves, and shoes for their little ones, from the old man, and then they began to persuade their husbands to go and buy of him also. At first all the men refused, saying that Ralph had made their boots all his life, and it was unfair to give him up now ; but the women went on persuading, and one by one the men consented ; till at last there was no one in the village, except Ralph and his son, little Siegfried, who was not wearing the old man's boots and shoes. At first Ralph only laughed, and said that they would soon come back to his little shop when they found what the old man's boots were worth, for no one could sell good things at such a price. But the boots wore out, and still all the people went back again to the old man's stall for more, though they knew that they would not last for long.

Then Ralph looked very grave, and began to say to every one that if they did not change, and return to buy his boots and shoes, as before, he would have to leave the village and go elsewhere, where his goods would find customers, for he could not live there if he sold nothing.

But strange to say, just at this time, though

the spring was well advanced, there was one night a bitter black frost, and in the morning the farmers found that all the young green corn was nipped and killed. Such a thing had never been known to happen before, and much it frightened the people, for what would they do if they had no corn with which to make their bread ?

Then there fell over everything a terrible blight, and it killed all the young fruit, which fell from the trees. This alarmed the people even more, for it would indeed be bad if they had neither fruit nor bread to eat.

Then the weather turned very hot—so hot that no one could endure it—and all the grass was dried up, and the cows had nothing to eat, so that there was no milk to be had ; and then the wells and streams began to dry up, and the people began to fear there would soon be no water either. The rains did not come, and then, worst of all, a bad fever broke out in the village, and many persons fell sick. Still, no one thought that all these misfortunes had anything to do with the old shoemaker, who still sat by the roadside, selling his shoes and singing his queer rhymes. At last, one day, one of the men remembered the old

saying, that the people of that village should always be prosperous as long as they were honest and industrious, and neither cruel nor greedy.

"But it is not our conduct," said they, "which has brought all this trouble on us, for we have been neither cruel, nor dishonest, nor greedy."

But little Handa shook her head and said, "You are very cruel, you are letting poor Ralph starve, because you will all buy your boots and shoes of the new old man. Ralph has worked well for you all his life, and now you all leave him and buy boots from the old man, just because he is new, though you know they are not half as good as Ralph's."

"You are talking of what you don't understand, Handa," said her father, the miller, angrily. "Of course it is right for us to buy everything as cheaply as we can. Be quiet, child!" And every one was angry with Handa for speaking; but she thought just the same, and she cried when she saw Ralph, or his wife, or Siegfried.

The fever in the village spread, and Ralph caught it, and was very ill, and had to lie in bed all day. He could not now have made boots, if any one had come to buy them of him. At

last he and his wife grew so poor that she had to sell all their furniture, to buy bread for them to eat. When that was gone she began to sell all the clothes they could do without, even to the boots from their feet, so that little Siegfried and she had to go about barefoot. The famine in the village grew worse, and the men began to trap and kill the animals in the forest to eat. At last there came a worse misfortune than all. A little girl named Frieda, the daughter of a farmer, disappeared, and could not be found anywhere. They sought for her far and near, in the village and in the forest, but she was nowhere to be found, and every one made up their minds that she had been stolen. But next day another little girl was missing, and it was vain to search for either. The next day another went, and then another, and another, till five little girls had disappeared; and on the sixth day little Handa went also. Then the people all sallied forth in a body, with swords and sticks; and they walked for miles around the village, and sought in every corner of the forest, but no trace of the children could be seen. Still, Handa's father would not rest, but walked about looking for her both day and night,

whilst poor Siegfried sought till his feet were blistered, and cut, and he was so weary that he could go no farther.

No one, who had known it in its old days, would have recognized the little village again. Instead of the villagers looking healthy, and happy, and rosy, they were worn, and sad, and pale, whilst the women's eyes were red with crying for the lost children. The houses were tumbling down, and none of the people seemed to have strength or care to build them up again.

Over all the place hung a hot thick mist, and each day the fever grew worse, and more were ill.

The second evening after Handa had disappeared, Siegfried wandered into the forest to cry by himself. Even that was changed; no birds sang sweetly in the branches as of yore. The leaves on the trees were turning brown, and falling before their time, and the animals darted away at the sound of footsteps, afraid lest they might be caught and killed.

As Siegfried walked along he kicked something with his foot, and found it was a trap in which a

poor little Hare had been caught, and was held by one leg.

“Poor Hare,” said Siegfried, “perhaps you used



to play about us when I walked here with Handa.
I will let you go, and then another time you will

be careful not to be caught ;” so he undid the trap, and the Hare sprang from it, but instead of running away, as Siegfried had expected, it sat quite still in front of him, looking into his face.

“ I saw Handa last night,” it said at last, in a wheezy voice.

Siegfried stared, but he was so overjoyed at hearing again of Handa, that he quite got over his surprise at hearing a Hare speak.

“ Saw Handa !” he cried. “ Oh, where ? Is she alive ? Oh, tell me.”

“ She is in a cavern underground,” said the Hare. “ She and all the other little girls are sitting there in a row, and they cannot move or speak, because on their feet are magic shoes that the old shoemaker made for them, which hold them as still as marble. He waited for them one by one near the village, and gave to each a pair of pretty yellow shoes, and when she had put them on, they ran away with her, and she could not stop try what she might ; and the shoes took her right into the middle of the forest. Then the ground opened, and the shoes ran right down into the cavern underground, and the earth closed up again ; and there sit poor Handa and the

other five little girls, who were all brought there in the same way ; and they will never move till some one pulls the shoes from their feet. Now the old man is waiting till to-night, when he will steal another little girl, and that will make seven, and then he will take them away and kill them. In reality he is a kind of gnome, and very cruel and wicked. He has disguised himself as a shoemaker, that he may steal these little girls. He belongs to a kind which only lives three hundred years, and then they begin to grow small, and gradually become less and less, till at last they vanish quite into air, unless they can steal seven little girls from whose bones they make a dreadful charm, which gives them life for another hundred years. I cannot tell you how many children this old man has killed, for he is nearly two thousand years old ; but now the time has come for him to kill seven more children, and if he cannot do it, he will shrivel and shrink, and at last vanish away."

Then Siegfrid clapped his hands. "That will be capital!" he cried. "I will go and pull the shoes off their ~~feet~~ at once, and then when he comes he will find them gone, and he will not be

able to get more in time, so that he will shrink and vanish."

The Hare shook its head. "You are going too fast," it said. "The shoes cannot be drawn from the children's feet as long as a single person in the village is wearing the boots and shoes made by the old man. So the first thing you must do will be to get all the shoes from every one in the village, and put them all into a heap, and burn them all together."

"But how can I do that?" asked Siegfried. "The people will never give me their boots to burn, and if I tell them all you tell me they will not believe me."

"Let us go and ask the Owl," said the Hare. "He flies about at night when there is no one to see. Perhaps he would steal them for you and bring them here." So Siegfried and the Hare started off together to find the Owl. He was sitting on a bough half asleep, for it was yet light, so he had not quite waked up, and Siegfried had to throw a bit of wood at him to wake him. He looked very cross when he opened his eyes and heard what they wanted, but he said,—

"I will do it for you if you will pay me. If

you will give me one of your eyes, I will bring you every one's boots from the village to-night, after they are all in bed."

"But why do you want my eye?" said Siegfried. "It can be of no use to you. You will not be able to see with my eye; and perhaps Handa will not love me if I have only one eye."

"That's not my business," said the Owl. "I want your eye, and I will not get you the shoes without it. I am very blind, and I think I might see better with your eye than I do with my own."

"Very well, then," said Siegfried, sighing. "Bring me the boots and shoes, and you shall have what you want."

"Come back at twelve to-night to this same place, and you will find all the boots and shoes here," croaked the Owl, and then he went to sleep again, and Siegfried wandered about the forest alone, for the Hare soon scampered away, saying she would be back at night. But Siegfried would not go home for fear he should be kept there, and not allowed to go back to the forest.

He cried at the thought of losing one of his bright brown eyes. "But I would give both my

eyes for Handa," he said to himself, "only then I should not be able to see her at all."

The evening wore away, and when twelve o'clock came, he went back to the place where he had left the Owl, and there, on a large bare spot under the trees, were heaped in a pile all the boots and shoes that the old man had sold since he came to the village.

Most were nearly worn out ; some, indeed, were nothing more than old soles with little bits of leather hanging to them ; but there they all were. There was the pretty pair of blue shoes that had first tempted Lisbeth, with the rosette torn off and worn quite white, and with great holes in the sides, and there also was the pair which Alys had bought like them.

On one side of the heap was the Owl, and the Hare sat beside him.

"There they all are," said the Owl. "Now let me be paid."

Siegfrid sighed, but he would not break his promise ; so he took out his right eye and gave it to the Owl, who flew away with it, hooting in triumph.

"I hope Handa will know me," he thought ;

and he felt almost inclined to cry, but he would not let the Hare see it, so he only said,—

“Let us set fire to them at once, then.”

“First listen to me,” said the Hare, “for when the shoes begin to burn I shall run off. When they have quite burnt out, you will find a heap of black ashes, and amongst them you must search carefully, and you will find a pair of sandals that seem not the least burnt or singed. These you must put on, and then stamp hard upon the ground, and it will open, and in front of you, you will see a long dark passage which leads to the underground cavern in which sit Handa and her companions. The sandals will last till you again step out of the passage into the forest, and then they will crumble and fall to pieces as if they had been burnt. So now good-bye. I should not have told you if you had not let me out of the trap.”

“Good-bye, kind Hare, and thank you for telling me,” said Siegfried, as the Hare ran off.

Then he took a bit of dry wood and set it alight, and placed it under the pile of boots. They soon caught fire, and burnt steadily, but Siegfried noticed that they made no noise except a

low hissing like water boiling. The pile went on burning for some time, and then went out quite suddenly, with a loud bang, leaving no sparks or smoke, and when Siegfried felt among the ashes he found they were quite cold. He searched among them as the Hare had directed, and at the bottom of the heap he found a pair of sandals, which seemed to be quite unhurt by the fire. He drew them on to his feet, and then standing in the middle of the ashes stamped hard. At once he felt the earth begin to move, and a great hole opened in front of him, which appeared to be the beginning of a long dark passage.

Siegfried summoned all his courage, and sitting on the edge of the hole dropped gently into the passage, and ran down it. It was quite dark, and so narrow that if he moved either of his hands he knocked the walls, and if he stretched his neck he touched the ceiling. There was only just room for him to walk, so that there was no fear of his losing his way. He went on and on, and still there was no light or no opening to right or to left. Then he began to call. He called "Handa, Handa, Handa!" and the name rang back to him from every side, but he knew it was

not Handa's voice he heard, but only a mocking echo. He feared the Hare had deceived him, and he might go on wandering in this dark passage for ever. He felt inclined to sit down and cry in despair, but there was no room to sit down, and just as he grew so tired that he thought he could go no farther, he saw in the distance a dim red light, and making one last effort he ran towards it. He found it came from a large bare vault, into which the passage led, and which was quite brilliantly lighted, though there was neither candle, lamp, nor window. On the farther side of the vault were sitting in a row what he at first believed to be six statues, but on looking a second time, to his great joy, he saw it was Handa and her five companions.

"Handa!" he cried. "Come, it is I." But Handa never moved, but sat as if she were turned to stone, looking straight in front of her. Then Siegfried remembered the magic shoes on her feet, and running to her pulled them off at once. Handa jumped up, and the first thing she said was, "Siegfried, what have you done to your eye?"

Siegfried told her all that had happened, and how he had given his eye to the Owl, and said he

did not care for the loss of his eye now that he had found her ; but Handa cried, and told him that she had rather the old man had killed her than that he should have lost his eye.

Then they turned to the five other little girls, who still sat like marble figures, and Siegfried drew the shoes from their feet, and one by one they sprang up, and thanked him for coming to save them. Siegfried showed them the long dark passage, and then led the way up it, the children following close behind him.

When they got to the opening in the forest, they saw that the sun was shining brightly, so that four or five hours had passed since Siegfried had burnt the shoes, although it had seemed much less.

He helped all the children out of the hole, and then jumped out himself, but no sooner were his feet again upon the grass than the sandals fell from them and crumbled to bits, as if they too had been burnt to ashes, and at the same moment the hole in the ground closed up, and no mark was left where it had been.

The miller, Handa's father, was so wearied with searching, that he was obliged to lie down

to sleep that night, but at sunrise he sprang up to start again on the hunt after the lost children.

When he was dressed he could not find his boots anywhere.

"'Tis very odd," he said, "for I know I placed them here. Wife, have you seen my boots?" But the wife said she had seen nothing of them, and, what was very strange, she could not find her own boots either.

"Never mind," quoth he, "I can walk as well without boots."

So he started with his feet bare, but when he came to the roadside where the old man was as usual putting up his stall, he paused.

"Neighbour," he said, "could you let me have a pair of very cheap boots this morning? I can't find my own anywhere."

And the old man answered as usual,—

"Come, buy! come, buy!

Shoes for all.

Who'll try? who'll try?"

As the miller took up some of the boots to choose a pair, he looked at the old man and said, "Why, friend, what's wrong? Are you ill? You have grown very pale and thin in the night."

But the old man said nothing, and the miller chose a pair of boots which he thought likely to fit, and put them on. But no sooner were they on his feet than they crumbled and fell to pieces as if they had been burnt to ashes. At this the miller stared, but the little old man turned paler than before, and he began to shake with fear.

“Why, man,” cried the miller, “what ails the boots? They are as rotten as an old potato. Give me another pair.” So he chose another pair, and put them on, but the same thing happened again. The moment they were upon his feet they crumbled and fell away like dry ashes. At this the miller flew into a violent rage.

“What do you mean by selling such things?” he cried. “Give me another pair, and be sure that this time they are sound, for if they go like the last I’ll beat you black and blue. No man shall serve me such a trick three times.”

But now the old man began to tremble in every limb, and his teeth chattered in his head with fear, whilst every moment he looked thinner and smaller, for he knew now that his wicked charms had been broken.

The miller took the third pair of boots, but

they were just like the other two, and at this his rage knew no bounds. He seized the old man by the collar, to drag him into the market-place, there to flog him soundly before all the people. But as he came near it he saw a great crowd, and there, in the centre of it, were Siegfried and Handa and the five little girls.

When Handa saw her father she ran straight into his arms, and he let go the little old man, who crouched upon the ground. Siegfried told the miller and the people all that had happened, and they all turned to look for the wicked old man who had caused all the trouble.

"What shall we do to him?" they cried.

"How shall we punish him?"

"Let us beat him," said one.

"Let us put him in prison," said another.

"Nay," said Siegfried, "his punishment will come of itself. See! it is coming already;" and when they looked at him, as he still crouched on the ground in front of the miller, they saw that he was already only half his former size, and that every moment he grew smaller and smaller. All the people stood staring at him and held their breath in intense astonishment, for the old man

now shrank so fast that soon he would not be visible at all. Smaller and smaller he grew every moment, till at last he was nothing but a mere speck, and then he was gone altogether.

For a few moments every one was silent ; at last the miller said, " Let us all be thankful that he is gone. And now see here : Siegfried has brought us back our girls, and has lost his eye for them ; how shall we reward him ? "

Then all the people turned and looked at Siegfried, who stood beside Handa.

" We will give him whatever he likes best," cried one.

" We will work for him all his life," said another.

" Nay," said Siegfried, " I don't want that, but promise me that as long as my father works well for you and makes you good shoes, you will not buy them of any one else. You brought all your troubles on yourselves by your cruelty in leaving him to starve after he had worked for you all his life."

" The boy is right," said the miller ; " we behaved very wickedly and selfishly, and we have been justly punished for our conduct."

Little by little everything in the village grew better. The fever went, and the thick fogs cleared away; the cottages were rebuilt, and fresh rains fell and revived the parched grass. Still, though all soon looked bright and cheerful as ever, the people knew that it could never be the same as before the old man came to it. They knew that the charm was broken, and that theirs was no better than all the other villages in the world. But it always was a very happy home to Siegfrid, who, when he grew up, was the village shoemaker, and married Handa, and lived happily to the end of his days.





THE HAIR TREE.



ANY years ago there lived a young Queen who was said to be the most beautiful woman in the world. Her skin was white and smooth as ivory, and her eyes bright as stars.

But her greatest beauty was her hair. It was neither black nor gold, but exactly half way between, just the colour of a dead beech-leaf. It was so long that it trailed behind her on the ground, and so thick that it took three maids to plait and arrange it every morning. Every day it was scented and washed by the court hair-dresser, who examined it carefully to see that it

was not growing thinner or falling off. The Queen's husband, the King, was as proud of it as his wife, and gave her all sorts of lovely jewellery with which to dress it—diamond pins and golden combs—and by his special command the court gardener always kept the best flowers for the Queen to place in her hair.

And not only the King and Queen, but all the courtiers and court ladies—indeed, every one in the country—praised and admired this beautiful hair; and although some of the court ladies were rather jealous of it, yet all agreed that it would be a real national misfortune if any harm came to it.

One morning the Queen was sitting at her window at work, when a big bird flew past. It was much like an eagle, with a hooked beak and ugly fierce eyes. It hovered around the window for some time, and at last settled on a tree outside and watched the Queen, who did not look up till she was surprised by hearing the bird say in a croaking voice,—

“Good day, Queen; you’ve plenty of hair.”

The Queen laughed, well pleased that even a common eagle should notice her beautiful tresses.

"Yes," she said, shaking it around her. "I've more than any other lady in the land."

"Then you've enough to give me a little," said the bird. "I can't find anything soft to line my nest with, and some of your hair would do nicely."



"My hair!" cried the Queen, staring at the bird in astonishment; "my beautiful hair to line your common nest with! You must be mad. Do you know that I'm the Queen, and that I value my hair more than anything on earth?"

"Nevertheless, it would do very nicely for my nest, and I advise you to give me some of it," croaked the eagle.

"Indeed, I shall do nothing of the kind," said the Queen, eagerly. "I never heard such impertinence in my life. Fly away immediately, or I will send out some of the soldiers to shoot you."

"They couldn't do it," said the bird, with a low laugh; "and if you tell them to try, you will be sorry for it afterwards. Now, I shall only give you one more chance. Queen, will you give me some of your hair for my nest?"

"No, I shall not," answered the Queen, half crying with anger; "it is very presumptuous of you to ask for such a thing."

The bird said no more, but rising into the air began to fly slowly round and round the tree on which he had been perched, and as he flew he sang these words in a low voice,—

"As the wind blows this tree's twigs bare,
So shall the proud Queen lose her hair;
The leaves shall come back with the first spring rain,
But when shall the Queen find her hair again?"

When he had done, the eagle gave a shrill cry

and disappeared, leaving the Queen in astonishment at his conduct.

It was autumn, and she heard the wind whistling in the branches, and presently a number of leaves dropped from the cherry-tree, and fluttered to the ground, and, at the same moment, a handful of her curls fell out into her lap.

The Queen started up in alarm, and ran with tears in her eyes to the King to tell him what had happened. The King laughed at her fears, assuring her the bird could do her no harm, and that it was only by chance that her hair fell out just then.

Yet the Queen could not feel comfortable, and that night, when her ladies were brushing her hair, a quantity came out on the brushes and two or three locks fell to the ground. Next morning when she awoke she found some long soft brown tresses lying loose on her pillow, and when she got out of bed, a whole shower fell from her head to the floor.

The Queen wrung her hands in despair, and at once sent for the court hairdresser, who came, bringing with him a number of bottles, all containing lotions to make the hair grow ; but all the

lotions in the world were of no use. There was no denying the fact that the Queen's hair was falling out in a most alarming manner. There was scarcely enough for her ladies to plait, and a bald spot was beginning to show on the top of her head. She dared not look at the cherry-tree to see if its branches were beginning to look bare also, but at every gust she heard the leaves falling, and trembled as she thought how soon they would all be gone. At last one morning, after the wind had been very fierce and strong, she ran to the window, and, looking out, saw that the cherry-tree's branches were quite bare—not a leaf to be seen anywhere. Then she turned to her looking-glass, and, dreadful to behold, she was quite bald also. Her last lock of hair had fallen off and left her head as smooth and white as an egg. At this fearful sight the Queen screamed and fainted, and when her ladies came to help her they were all so shocked that they could scarcely speak. As for the King, his grief was so great that he sobbed aloud.

The Queen was laid on her bed, and the court physicians and hairdressers held a great consultation as to what was to be done to make her hair

grow, and it was agreed that her head should go through a regular course of treatment. In the meantime she said she would keep her room, and it was given out that she was very ill, in order that the common people might not know what a dreadful thing had happened. But all the doctors and hairdressers could do nothing. Not a single hair reappeared on the Queen's bare white head, and it was impossible to conceal the fact any longer. There was great sorrow all over the country when it became known, and a general mourning was proclaimed till the Queen's hair should have grown again. In the meantime she wore a little lace cap trimmed with jewels. It was a very pretty little cap, and very becoming—so, at least, all the courtiers said. But it was not so beautiful as her own hair, and the Queen felt this so much that the first time she appeared in public in her cap she could scarcely help crying.

So things went on for a little time, and the doctors and hairdressers were all racking their brains to find something to make hair grow. But the Queen fretted so much that she lost her appetite and really fell ill, and was obliged to keep to her bed. The first night after her illness she

dreamt a dream, which she thought about all day long. She dreamt that she was sitting in the palace garden, when there came up a little man, who was the strangest object she had ever seen. He was no bigger than a big spider, and all dressed in green. When he saw her he began to dance and sing this rhyme :—

“ When the grass is thin, you must mow it, mow it, mow it,
But when the ground is bare, you must sow it, sow it, sow
it.”

And as he sang these words he took out a handful of tiny seeds from his pocket, and began to scatter them about. Directly there sprang up a little plant, which grew and grew and grew until it became a big tree, and then it put forth buds, and the buds burst, and there came out not leaves, but tiny locks of hair, which grew and grew until they touched the ground, and covered the tree all over.

When the Queen awoke she could think of nothing but the strange Hair Tree ; and that night when she went to sleep she dreamt exactly the same thing. On the third night she had the same dream again, and when she awoke she called to

her husband, and told him of what she had dreamt three nights running.

“And now, my dear husband,” she continued, “I am sure that the only thing which can ever make my hair grow is some seeds from the Hair Tree. I entreat you to spare no effort to discover it, and to offer a reward to any one who will bring you news of it. For I feel”—here the Queen’s voice grew very husky—“that if I do not find it I shall never recover my hair, and if not, I shall die, for I cannot live without it.” So saying she fell back on the pillow and closed her eyes.

The King at once called a great meeting of his lords together, and told them the Queen’s dream, and a herald was sent round to proclaim that one hundred thousand pounds would be given to any one who could bring some seeds from the Hair Tree, or even tell where it was to be found. And great placards were pasted up all over the kingdom, offering the reward. So every one began to talk of this strange Hair Tree, which no one had ever heard of before, and to wonder where it could be—for all would have liked to have earned the reward—but all agreed that the Hair Tree was nowhere in that country.

Now it chanced that a poor sailor named Rupert saw one of the placards, and stopped to read it. He was a strong young man, but he had neither father nor mother, nor sisters nor brothers, and he felt so lonely that he did not care what became of him.

So when he saw the placard and the large reward that was offered to any one who could bring news of the Hair Tree, he began to wonder where it was, and if he could not find it.

"One hundred thousand pounds is a lot of money," he said to himself. "There is no reason why I should not find it as well as another man. I have a good mind to go and look for it, though it seems rather a wild-goose chase."

So he packed up his things, and took a little boat, and sailed away towards the north; for it was there, he knew, was a strange country where animals speak like men and women, and plants have hands and eyes; and he thought that there he might find the wonderful Hair Tree.

In the meantime half the young men in the kingdom had started off to search, hoping to win the reward. Some went east, some went west, some north, some south; and they sought in every

imaginable place and country. Some gave it up very soon, and returned home, saying that there was no such tree. Others went on and on, asking every one they met if they had heard of or seen it, and finding no trace of it, yet, being determined not to give it up and return home empty-handed, went still farther and farther. And so months passed away, and the Queen's head still remained bald.

In order that her Majesty might not be annoyed by the sight of other women's hair when her own was gone, the King ordered that they should all wear little caps which quite covered the head and came down on the forehead; and because no one liked these caps, and all thought them very unbecoming, the court ladies were almost as anxious as the Queen that the tree should be found, and her hair grow again.

Rupert sailed and sailed to the north till he began to think he must be coming to the magic country of which he had heard. For a long time he went on without seeing land anywhere, but at last he came in sight of a little island standing quite alone in the middle of the water. On it there grew neither grass nor flowers of any sort,

but three solitary trees. One was much like a common nut-tree, only all the nuts were of a bright red colour; the boughs of the second were laden with precious stones of all kinds, diamonds and rubies, emeralds and pearls; but the third tree was the strangest of all, for its boughs were quite bare, and looked as if they were made of polished brass, and on the centre at the top grew an enormous pod, which pointed straight at the sky. It looked like a great brass drum.

Rupert pulled up his boat, and, springing on to the island, filled his pockets full of precious stones and common nuts, and then stood still looking at the enormous pod and wondering what it could contain. While he watched it there was a noise like a clap of thunder, and the pod burst asunder, and twelve round shining golden nuts fell to the ground. At the same time the tree withered as if it had been struck by lightning, and the brass branches all fell away.

Rupert was so frightened by the noise the pod made in bursting that he had buried his face in the ground, but when he found all was quiet again, he slowly raised himself, and picked up one of the gold nuts to examine it. As they were

pretty and bright, he thought he would take them all for curiosities, and he placed them on the seat of his little boat. But as he rowed away from the island he began to feel sure he was coming to the enchanted land. The fishes no longer started away from the side of the boat, but swam after it in a long trail, and when he baited his line and threw it overboard not one would bite, but swam up quite close to the hook and then turned away, giving little low, scoffing laughs. Rupert was sorely puzzled, and sat looking at the water in wonder, when he heard a whirring of wings overhead, and a great yellow bird flew round the boat, and at last perched on the prow and peered curiously into his face.

After a few minutes it said, "Are those nuts you have in your pocket?"

Rupert said "Yes," and drawing out a handful of the red nuts, offered them to the bird.

"Crack some and give me the kernels," said the bird. Rupert obeyed, afraid to refuse, as he remembered what a dreadful thing had happened to the poor Queen for not being polite to a bird. The bird went on eating the nuts, and then said,—

"Where are you going?"

Then the sailor told how the Queen had been rude to a bird, who had in return destroyed her hair.

"I know ; that was me," said the bird, with a chuckle. "Give me some more nuts."

Rupert again handed the bird the nuts, and then went on relating how the Queen had had a strange dream of a wonderful Hair Tree, and how the King had offered a reward to any one who could find it ; so he was going to look for it.

"You will search a long time for the Hair Tree, I expect," said the bird, still munching. "If the Queen waits for her hair till it is found, she will have to do without it nearly all her life. I suppose she'll wish now that she had been civil." But as he finished speaking, the bird's glance fell on the golden nuts lying on the seat, and with a shrill cry he flew at them ; but Rupert had seized them first and held them firmly out of his reach.

"What are these ?" gasped the bird. "Where did you get them ? Tell me at once."

"They came," said Rupert, still holding the bag tightly, "from the single pod of a tree that has no leaves, and whose branches look like brass, and

that grows on a little island not far from here." On hearing this the bird gave a low cry, and crouched down on one side of the boat, where it sat eyeing Rupert and the nuts greedily, and shaking with rage. "Then they are the nuts of the zirbal-tree," he said at last; "and the pod has broken when I was not there. For two thousand years have I waited for that pod to break, and now it will be two thousand years before it is ripe again, and it is the only zirbal-tree living, and there is nothing on earth like its nuts."

When Rupert saw the bird crouched in one corner of the seat, with its head lowered and its feathers ruffled, and remembered how much mischief it had done, he felt strongly inclined to seize it and wring its neck, but he restrained himself, and said,—

"You had better sit up. I've got the nuts, and I mean to keep them; but perhaps, if you'll answer me one or two questions, I'll give you one."

On this the bird drew itself up, and, arranging its ruffled plumage, sat watching Rupert suspiciously.

"You say you're the bird who charmed away the Queen's hair. Well, if you'll tell me how she can grow it again I'll give you a nut."

"What!" cried the bird, flapping his wings angrily, "tell you how the Queen can recover her hair? Never—I'd sooner never taste a nut again."

"Very well," said Rupert, picking up a golden nut, and holding it temptingly towards the bird. "Only tell me which way I ought to steer to find the country where the Hair Tree grows, and I will give you this."

The bird sat silent, with his head on one side, watching Rupert for some time, and then with a sudden cry rose into the air and was out of sight almost before he knew it had moved.

At first he felt angry at this, but as it was gone, it was no use thinking about it, and, anyhow, he had learnt that the golden nuts were very valuable, and he thought if it wanted them so much it might perhaps return for them.

He was right. All day and night he drifted about without coming in sight of land, but next morning at sunrise he saw, in the far distance, a dim line, and at the same moment he heard a

whirring of wings overhead, and the Eagle flew down and perched on the edge of the boat as before.

Rupert remained quiet, without seeming to notice it, until at last it broke silence with,—

“Are you in the same mind as last night? I’ll tell you the way to the Hair Tree country for a zirbal nut.”

The sailor took one out of his pocket, and said,—

“Tell me first, then, and you shall have the nut afterwards.”

“That is the country where the Hair Tree grows, in front of you,” said the bird. “Many go to it, but very few return.”

“Why is that?” asked Rupert, as he gave the bird the nut.

“Why?” repeated the bird, seizing it with his bill. “You had better go there and find out. You know now where it is.”

Rupert pondered a little; then he said, “If you will tell me how to find my way safely to the Hair Tree and back, when I pass here again I will give you six whole nuts. And if you refuse I shall take my gun and shoot you.”

The bird gave a scornful laugh. "You couldn't shoot me," he said; "you can try if you like. Why, if it were not for the magic fruit in your pocket, you wouldn't be here now. It is only that which has protected you from my spells. Well, perhaps I will do what you want, and tell you how to find your way to the Hair Tree; only, you must promise faithfully to give me the nuts when you return."

The sailor promised again, and the bird continued,—

"When you reach land you can go on shore at any place—it doesn't matter where—and walk straight on. You will find that all the animals can speak; but I advise you not to speak to any of them. And, whatever you do, beware of the plants and flowers; for they all have hands and arms, and will try to seize you, and if once they get you nothing can save you—no, not even your magic nuts. You must go on till you come to a high wall, in which is a heavy iron door, over which is written,—

'Only he who knows can enter here,
Yet only he can know, who enters without fear.'

And you must stand before it, and say,—

‘ I know, I know ;
Inside the wind does blow,
Inside the waters flow ;
This makes the Hair Tree grow—
I know, I know.’

Then the doors will fly open, and you can pass in. Within grows the Hair Tree. What else you will find there I shall not say. Now, I have kept my part of the agreement ; see that you keep yours when you return.”

So saying, the bird flapped his wings once and disappeared.

Rupert looked about, and finding himself very near land, rowed to shore, and stepped from his boat. It seemed to be a pretty sort of country, and at first he did not notice anything unusual. He walked straight on till he came to a row of splendid sunflowers, and stopped in front of them to admire them, when all at once a pair of beautiful white hands and arms were thrust out from the nearest stalk, and grasping him by the shoulders began to pull him, with a strength he could not resist. At once all the other stalks had put out their hands, and were reaching

towards him. And from above the large yellow flowers there appeared heads—women's heads—with beautiful dreamy faces and bright golden hair. In another moment Rupert felt the arms would have crushed him to death, for they were fast tightening their hold, and felt like iron hands.

Suddenly he remembered the jewels in his pockets, and drawing out a brilliant emerald, flashed it before the face of the sunflower in whose arms he was. "Leave me alone," he cried, "and you shall have this."

But still the arms bound him with their strong grasp, and gave no sign of loosening their hold. Then Rupert took the jewel and, holding it above his head, said, "If you don't let me go at once, I will throw it beyond your reach, so that you will never get it."

For a moment the arms wavered, then they slowly gave way, and Rupert burst from them trembling at the danger from which he had escaped. With haste, and still keeping at arms' length, he dropped the jewel into the cruel beautiful white hand that was stretched out to receive it. Then he ran as fast as he could from

the row of sunflowers and sat down, still panting and trembling, on a large bare stone.

After he had a little recovered himself, he looked about him, and perceived that not only the sunflowers but all the trees had hands and arms, which they were always stretching to try and catch something, and on looking on the ground he saw that even the blades of grass were armed with tiny hands, which they kept stretching into the air.

For amusement he buried his hand in the grass, and in an instant it was clutched by a hundred tiny hands, that pulled it hard. He could easily draw it away, for it was no more than if a number of spiders had seized his hand. He wondered much at this country, where all the plants seemed to be alive and he had seen no trace of man or beast. While he was thinking, a shadow fell across his path, and looking up he saw a large handsome striped tigress standing in front of him looking into his face. He at once put his hand to his gun, and would have shot it if it had not said in a quiet voice,—

“Why are you going to shoot me? I shall do you no harm. How did you come here? You

are the first man who has been on this island since I came."

Rupert stared in astonishment at hearing a tigress speak so plainly, and said,—

"I came in a little boat. My name is Rupert, and I am come to look for the Hair Tree. Who are you? I never heard a tigress speak before."

"I am not really a tigress; I am a woman who was turned into a tigress by a wicked fairy. Tell me what you want with the Hair Tree, and how you managed to get here alive, and I will tell you my story."

So Rupert told the tigress all that had happened to him; how he had set out to find the Hair Tree, and how he had picked up the nuts of the zirbal-tree, and his promise to the yellow bird, and how he had only just escaped from the sunflowers.

She listened quietly; then she said, "You owe your life to the nuts of the zirbal-tree. They are enchanted, and that is why the yellow eagle could not kill you at once, as he would otherwise have done, for he is a most spiteful creature, but the magic nuts saved you from him, as well as from a number of dangers of this island of which you do not know. You are the first living man who

has ever entered so far. Now let us sit down, and keep well out of reach of the grasping hands, and I will tell you my story."

Rupert sat down, and the tigress arranged herself at his feet, and curled her tail beneath her, and began as follows :—

THE STORY OF TREVINA.

My name was Trevina. I was the youngest of three sisters, and my father was a miller. I was the most beautiful of the three. We lived in a mill on the bank of a river, close by the sea, and my greatest amusement was to search about on the rocks for the strange animals and seaweed I found there.

A little way in the sea was a small island, on which great sea-birds collected, but where we never went, as there was nothing to be got there, and it was difficult to climb on it, for it was surrounded by sharp rocks. Nevertheless I often looked at it, and wondered what sort of a place it was, and thought I would try and get to it when I could.

One evening as I was walking along the shore, I noticed that I was followed by a large tortoise, who kept close to me, and looked up into my face beseechingly. I did not think it odd, for there were plenty of tortoises among the rocks, and



when they were hungry they often followed us, hoping for food. But when I got home I found the same tortoise in my room, and not liking to send away a creature who kept so close to me,

I gave it some bread and milk, and a little bit of matting to sleep on. My sisters laughed at me for my new pet, but nevertheless I took great care of my tortoise, and let it follow me where it liked. After a time, however, its affection for me became quite tiresome. I could not move without its following me closely, and even if I fell asleep and woke I found it sitting watching me. I began to feel provoked with it, and declared that if it continued to be so worrying I would take it and throw it into the sea. Would that I had, alas!

My father owned a boat on the river, and often on hot afternoons I would step into it, and lie there, idly gazing at the sky, and enjoying the rippling motion, and as it was always safely moored to the side I felt no fear of drifting away.

On one unlucky afternoon I went out about sunset, and placed myself comfortably in the cushions at the bottom of the boat, meaning to spend an hour in reading. But I was overcome with the heat, and ere I had been there long fell fast asleep. I slept soundly, and when I awoke I found that it was getting quite dark. Starting up, I saw with terror that the boat was no longer

in the river, but had been evidently loosed from its fastenings and had drifted to sea, and was already half way to the island. I did not know that the tortoise had followed me, but looking on the seat I saw it sitting there, and I felt a positive hatred for it when I saw the self-satisfied leer with which it was regarding me. To my fright and astonishment, it drew near to me, and with a deep bow said,—

“Be not astonished, lovely Trevina, and be assured that no harm shall come to you. Know that I am no common tortoise, but am the king of the tortoises, and only for your sake have assumed the shape of a common animal, in order that I might dwell near you. I have loved you from the first moment I saw you, and now intend to make you my wife. When we arrive at the island, where my armies are waiting for me, I shall appear in my proper form. Resistance on your part will be useless. From here no one can hear your cries, and as soon as we reach the island my people will bore a hole in the bottom of the boat and sink it, so your return will be impossible. After a day or two I shall transport you to my own home. I should do so

at once, were it not that I fear the jealousy of my mother, who wishes me to marry the snake-princess."

I scarcely could hear him to the end with patience. Starting up, I tried to seize him in my hands, meaning to throw him into the water, and so rid myself of his impertinence ; but the moment I touched him his whole shape began to change, and swell, and he was quickly transformed into the most hideous figure I had ever beheld. It was like a little black man not more than two feet high, and it carried on its back an enormous shell, while its arms and legs were exactly like those of an immense tortoise. And its face ! I shudder even now when I remember how hideous it was. The great glaring eyes, the huge mouth, the hideous shrivelled skin ! I screamed aloud with all my might, hoping my father or sisters might hear, and, turning my face, covered my eyes with my hands, that they might not be annoyed by the sight of the disgusting creature. But all my shrieks were vain, my voice was blown away by the wind, and no answer came from the shore. On seeing my distress my tormentor only laughed.

Gradually the boat sailed to the island, and on looking up I saw that it was covered with tortoises of all sizes, evidently awaiting our arrival. I think I must have fainted. Anyhow, I remember nothing more till I found myself lying on my back in the middle of the island, surrounded by tortoises, and their hideous king leaning tenderly over me. I started up and, bursting through their lines, ran down to the water's edge, but finding there no means of escape, I flung myself on the ground, crying and sobbing. I felt sure that in time my father and sisters would miss me, and come to the island to search for me, but the notion of being left alone with my horrid tortoise lover till they could come was dreadful. All that night I sat upon a rock close by the water's edge, weeping bitterly, but still feeling quite sure that in the morning I should see my father coming for me; but morning came and he did not appear, and the day passed away, and still he did not come, and when evening came round again, I began to fear I must give myself up, and had determined that, rather than listen to the odious tortoise-king, I would throw myself into the water, and so put an end to my

life. I was standing upon a rock looking into the clear green water, and thinking whether I would wait another day or spring into it at once, and so end my troubles, when I heard a soft voice above me saying, "Trevina," and looking up, I saw a beautiful sea-gull floating in the air.

"Poor Trevina," it said, "I can't carry you away, but I can take a message to your father. I hate the tortoise-king and his mother as much as you do, and would gladly do anything to annoy them. Tell me what I shall say to your father, and I will fly to him to-night."

"Will you really, dear, dear gull?" cried I, joyfully. "I shall be grateful to you all my life. Go, then, and tell him that I was stolen by the tortoise-king, and am upon the little island. Tell him to come for me at once, and to bring plenty of guns and swords with which to kill the tortoises." But scarcely were the words out of my mouth when there was a rumbling noise beside me, and with a bang like thunder a gulf opened in the ground, and there started up through it a hideous figure, very much like the tortoise-king, but bigger and fatter, whom I at once guessed to be his mother. The sea-gull,

at sight of her, gave a shrill cry and flew away.

“So, girl,” she cried, in a dreadful voice, “not content with rejecting my son’s noble offers, you would try to put an end to his life. It is lucky, indeed, for him that, with a mother’s care, I have been watching him and you, when he thought me far away. I was sure no good would come of it, when he honoured you, a common human being, with his love, instead of offering it, as I wished, to the snake-princess. But now you shall be punished. Bitterly may you regret your unfeeling conduct.”

At this moment I saw the tortoise-king coming in haste towards us, waddling as fast as his little short legs and heavy shell would let him.

He turned to his mother, and, falling on his knees before her, tried to calm her rage—but in vain. She continued, more fiercely than before,—

“Yes! you shall be well punished, for you shall become a tigress; and, left by yourself in the enchanted land, you will wish you had been grateful to my son for his kindness in offering to make you his wife.” Then she waved her black hands in the air, and I felt a dreadful change coming upon

me. Hair was growing all over me. My arms became fore-legs like those of a tiger. I felt that a tail was beginning to sprout out behind.

“And now,” cried the tortoise-queen, her eyes sparkling with spiteful pleasure, “you may be very thankful if you remain in your present condition ; but if you only eat one mouthful of flesh, you will become a real tigress, and then you can never regain your proper form. As it is, the only way by which you can ever recover your own shape is by being beaten till you bleed, by a man with the rods that grow beneath the Hair Tree.”

I could not speak : I tried, but my voice was choked with tears. I clasped my hands, but found that they would not close on account of the claws which were growing at the ends. I threw myself on the ground at the Queen’s feet to beg for mercy, but I was not allowed to remain long, for, taking me by the nape of my neck, she carried me quickly through the air, and did not stop till we reached this island, where she flung me on the ground with a spiteful laugh, and vanished. For some time I lay in silent misery, till roused by the voice of the sea-gull calling me by name, and raising myself, I saw it hovering near me.

"Poor Trevina," he said mournfully, "you are worse off now than you were before; but keep a good heart. You will some time recover your proper form, I feel sure; but be sure you eat nothing but herbs."

I thanked the sea-gull, and tried to feel more cheerful; but my case seemed a hard one, for how was ever any man to come to this enchanted ground? And if any one did get so far, I knew there must be great difficulty in getting the rods from the Hair Tree.

You are the first man I have seen since I was brought here; and since that time I have lived on grass and herbs. Every day have I wept afresh at the thought that I should never again see my dear home or my father and sisters; and my joy, therefore, on seeing you knew no bounds."

As she finished, the tigress turned on one side to wipe away a tear, and Rupert was scarcely less moved than she by the story of her misfortunes.

"But how can I help you, poor Trevina?" said he, after a pause.

"Help me!" cried the tigress, her eyes spark-

ling with joy. "Are you not searching for the Hair Tree, and do not the rods with which I am to be beaten grow around it? Dear, kind sailor, you will surely not refuse to pick one and beat me with it."

Rupert, of course, could not refuse to do as she asked, but the thought of having to beat her filled him with disgust. After a pause she arose, and bade him do the same.

"Now," she said, "it is time for you to continue your journey. I cannot go with you farther, but you must continue straight ahead, turning neither to the right nor left, and take the greatest care you can of the zirbal nuts, for they are the best protection you can have against every sort of spell. You will find me here on your return, but be sure you do not forget to bring with you some of the rods which grow underneath the Hair Tree."

Rupert promised, and said adieu, and went on his way; but he was so full of thoughts of poor Trevina and her sorrows that he had almost forgotten the Queen's hair and the reward, and was more anxious to find the wonderful Hair Tree, that he might beat the tigress with the rods he

found there, than to gather the hair seeds for the Queen.

As he went on he found the path growing narrower and narrower, and the rocks on each side grew larger and larger, and began to arch over the top of the path, and to darken it. All round the wind moaned piteously, and from far off he could hear a sound like running water. At last he came to a place where the rocks blocked up the path, and in them he perceived a small door. He pushed it open, and stepped through into a long dark narrow passage, down which he walked. Presently a faint light became visible, and after a time he found himself in front of a high wall, so high that he could not see to the top, in which was a gate on which was written, in letters of gold,—

“ Only he who knows can enter here,
Yet only he can know, who enters without fear.”

Then Rupert remembered what the bird had said, and stood in front of the gate and said,—

“ I know, I know;
Inside the wind doth blow,
Inside the waters flow;
This makes the Hair Tree grow—
I know, I know.”

In a moment the door flew open, and Rupert stepped inside and looked about him.

He found himself standing at the beginning of a long flat tract of country, but for a moment or two he was so dazzled by the light which enveloped everything, that he could scarcely see.

This light was quite unlike anything he had ever seen ; it was of a pale clear green colour, and as his eyes grew a little more used to it, he perceived that it filled every nook and corner, and the only shade anywhere was thrown by the black rays of a black sun in the sky !

It was very strange. He rubbed his eyes and looked again, but there it was sure enough. The sun was coal black, and threw out long black rays, while everywhere else was light.

A little in front was a black river flowing around an island, in the centre of which was a mound where grew a tree—such a tree ! At sight of it Rupert's heart gave a great bound, and he felt as if he would go mad with joy, for he knew when he saw it he had come to the end of his journey. On that tree grew no leaves, but it was covered with soft fine hair, which grew from all

its branches and fell in waves to the ground. He could not see it very plainly, for the river was wide ; but he saw that the island was covered with plants of various kinds. He sat down on the pebbly bank of the river, gazing across and wondering if the water were deep, or how he should manage to cross to the other side. While he was sitting thinking, he put his hand into his pocket and drew out a zirbal nut. Just as he was looking at it, he heard a rippling of the water, and perceived an immense swan swimming along towards him. It was as large as a horse, and brilliant yellow all over, with eyes of shining red that shot out sparks of fire. Rupert sprang back from the bank, for the swan appeared to be very angry, and called out in an awful voice,—

“What man are you ? and what do you do here so near the magic Hair Tree ?”

“My name is Rupert,” said the sailor, trembling in every limb, “and I mean no harm ; I only wish to gather some of the seeds to bring back the Queen’s hair. I should be much obliged to you if you will tell me how to get over the water, and if it’s deep.”

The swan did not answer, but its eyes were

fixed on the nut in Rupert's hand, which it was eyeing greedily.

"What have you there?" it said, after a pause, in a much quieter voice. "Surely that is a zirbal nut. Dear me, it is two thousand years since I tasted one. Give me a bit of that one."

"I am sure you are very welcome to it," Rupert was beginning, but he stopped himself in time, and said instead,—

"If you will take me on your back across the river, and wait for me and bring me back after I have got some hair seeds, I will give you this one, but on no other condition."

The swan stopped, and thought, and then said, "Very well;" and swimming close to the bank, beckoned to Rupert to get on his back. He obeyed, and the swan swam swiftly over the water. As it approached the farther side, it turned its long head and said,—

"Whatever you do, don't let the lip-flowers kiss you. They are sure to ask to. But they won't really want to kiss. They will only bite a piece out of your cheek; they are terribly greedy."

The sailor thanked the swan for its advice, and sprang upon the mound. It was covered with

plants bearing such flowers as man had never seen before. Some of them were like mouths—soft red lips folded over the whitest rows of shining teeth ; and when Rupert struck one of them by chance, they gave a loud angry cry, whilst all the others burst into such weird laughter that he thought it dreadful to hear. But one and all, as he passed by them, swayed their long stalks towards him, and said, “ Let me give you a kiss—only one : let me kiss your cheek.” But he minded what the swan had said, and, keeping carefully out of their reach, turned to examine the other flowers. Some were like delicate waxen ears, and these, with their dark green leaves, he did not think at all ugly. But the prettiest of all grew on long slender stalks, and bent like lilies, and their flowers were like human eyes. Big eyes, small eyes, blue eyes, brown eyes, black eyes, hazel eyes, eyes with long black lashes, eyes with scarcely any, eyes with heavy lids—all sorts of eyes, all looking curiously at him. He thought them so pretty that he determined to gather some, and on coming to a very beautiful bright blue eye, he put his hand to the stalk to break it off, but thereupon it wept such floods of tears that the sailor felt sorry

for it, and left it glistening on its stem, whereat all the lips burst into a chorus of shrill laughter. But now he was nearing the wonderful Hair Tree, and could think of nothing else. All round it grew a double row of dark green plants, with long stiff leaves, from whose centres grew tall solid silver rods in the place where flowers should be. These rods stood so near together that they made quite a compact railing around the Hair Tree, and it was impossible to get to it without passing through their line.

Drawing close to them, the sailor examined them carefully, to see where they could be gathered, for doubtless these were the rods of which Trevina spoke. They seemed to be fastened into the plants with a sort of hinge, and beneath this Rupert took hold of one to break it off, but no sooner had he begun to pull, than the rod, swinging on its joint, dealt him a smart blow on the face, which made him stagger back, and all the lip flowers laughed again.

"Oh! zirbal nuts," he cried, taking one from his pocket, "you have helped me before, help me again." No sooner had he spoken than all the lips cried out, "A nut, a nut—give us a nut!"

Then a beautiful rosy mouth, growing on a very tall stalk, turned to the others and called, "Silence!" and bending towards Rupert said, "Listen ; take out your penknife and cut that nut in pieces, and give them to us, and we will bite off some of the silver rods for you, so that you can pass through to the Hair Tree."

Rupert agreed, and taking out his penknife began to chop up the nut, whilst a number of mouths turned themselves to the silver rods and began to bite their stalks. It was vain for the rods to slash about, they could not hurt the lip-flowers, who went on steadily gnawing till half a dozen rods lay on the ground, leaving a clear path through to the Hair Tree.

Rupert at once gave the pieces of nut to the mouths (which opened greedily to receive them), and walked up to the tree and stood beneath it.

What a wonderful tree it was! The hair rippled down from all its branches, and was of all colours—black outside, and growing lighter and lighter till, quite near the trunk, it was of fine pure gold. Rupert took hold of it and passed it through his fingers. How soft and thick it felt! What would not the court ladies have given for

even a tiny branch of it. Then he thought of the Queen's hair, and turned to look for the seeds.

He found them in little pods growing close to the branches, and at once tried to pull them off. But he found that they grew on hairs so long and thick that he had to take out his knife and cut them, and even then it was a long time before he could gather any quantity. At last he succeeded in picking a handful, and, wrapping them carefully in his handkerchief, placed them in his bosom. When he turned to go, the eye-flowers had all closed, and were evidently fast asleep; the lips, too, were shut and still, and said nothing as he passed them. The black sun was fast sinking, and the black rays had become longer and darker. Rupert walked quickly down to where the yellow swan was waiting, carrying the silver rods with him.

"Make haste," said the swan; "what a long time you've been! It's getting quite light, and I want to go to sleep."

"To sleep!" said the sailor, staring. "Why, one goes to sleep when it gets dark, one wakes when it's light."

"Does one?" said the swan, scornfully. "That would be very foolish; where would be the use of going to sleep, and shutting one's eyes in the dark? The dark never hurts any one's eyes. Of course one shuts one's eyes when it's too light, and it would hurt one to keep them open."

Rupert was silent, not knowing what to say, and the swan swam with him quickly across the water.

"Now," he said, as he landed him on the other side, "give me my nut, and take my advice, go away as quickly as you can. It's getting so light that soon you won't be able to see anything for the glare."

Rupert obeyed, and turned at once to go back, for a dull glaring light was beginning to spread everywhere as the black sun sank, and no sooner had it disappeared than the light became so intense that he could scarcely see, and had to shade his eyes with his hands as he felt his way to the door in the wall. This time no speech on his part was necessary, for it stood wide open, though it shut with a loud bang as soon as he had passed through it. He walked as quickly as he

could down the long dark passage, and out into the broad daylight again, and there he sat down to think over all the strange things he had seen. He would have believed it all a dream, but for the seeds in his bosom and the rods at his side. And there, just as he had left them, were the long rows of sunflowers with the beautiful faces looking over their tops, and the white arms and hands stretching out from their sides ; and then, after a few minutes, he saw the tigress coming towards him, walking very slowly, as if she had scarcely strength to move, and looking very thin.

"At last you are come," she cried, when she saw him ; "how long I have waited for you !"

"Long !" said Rupert, staring with surprise ; "why, I have not been gone many hours."

"Hours !" said the tigress, feebly ; "why, you have been gone six months."

"Six months !" cried Rupert, "and it has seemed to me like two hours."

"But you have returned, and have brought the rod with you," she said, joyfully. "So now all is right. But I am very hungry, for I have not been able to find any grass or herbs for a week. So now make haste and beat me at once."

“Beat you, you poor starved creature!” cried the sailor, looking pityingly at her; “beat a poor thing who has scarcely strength to crawl! I wouldn’t do such a thing for the world!”

“Beat me—beat me, I tell you,” called the tigress, writhing on the ground in front of him. “Beat me at once, or it will be the worse for both of us.” Then she added, in a terrible voice, “Did I not tell you I was very hungry? Beat me at once, or *I shall eat you!*”

On hearing this, Rupert made no more ado, but, seizing the silver rod, began to thrash the tigress with all his might. She stood quite still to receive his blows, only every now and then urging him on by calling,—

“Harder! Beat harder!”

Rupert obeyed, and continued to beat till he saw that she was bleeding, and then, just as he was going to fling aside the rod and declare he would beat no longer, her skin began to shrivel, and at last fell to the ground, and there arose from it the loveliest maiden Rupert had ever beheld. Her hair, of burning gold, was worthy of the Hair Tree itself, whilst her shining blue eyes and rosy lips were far more

beautiful than the strange flowers that grew about it.

Rupert stood still staring at her in wonder, but she at once put out her hand and said, "How can I thank you enough for what you have done for me? I am Trevina. Now let us hurry away from this dreadful place as fast as we can, but first give me a nut to protect me from spells."

Rupert at once gave her one, and as she fastened it into the bosom of her dress, she turned to him and asked with a smile, "Am I like what you expected?"

"You are far, far more beautiful," answered he; "is it really possible that you were that tigress?"

"I was indeed that tigress," said Trevina, as they began to walk quickly to the shore; "and should most likely have remained so but for you. As it is, I shall not feel comfortable till we are off this dreadful island; although the zirbal nuts are the best protection we could have."

"Now, indeed, am I thankful that the Queen lost her hair," cried Rupert, "since it has helped me to set you free, lovely Trevina."

They soon found the little boat, and getting into it sailed away as fast as they could.

After a little time Rupert remembered the bird and his promise, and said to Trevina that he supposed they should soon see him coming for his nuts.

"You have just eight nuts left, and you have promised the eagle six," said Trevina. "By all means give him the six you promised him, but let me entreat you to keep the remaining two. One I have here, and be sure you do not let him have the other. Remember that the moment you have parted from it, he will have as much power over you as he had over the poor Queen. He will beg you for it, but he must not have it."

Rupert promised, and in a very short time they saw the eagle flying towards them. He flew round them in circles, and at last alighted on the prow of the boat.

"Well," he said, fiercely, looking towards Rupert, "I see you have the seeds. Now where are my nuts?"

"Here they are," said he, taking six from his pocket, and giving them to him. He took them in his claws and hid them in his feathers, but still he did not go.

"You have yet got one more," he said; "what

are you going to do with it? You do not eat zirbal nuts."

"I mean to keep it as a curiosity," answered the sailor.

"But what use will that be?" croaked the bird; "will you not give it to me?"

"No, I can't do that," said Rupert; "you must be content with what you've got."

"In my nest at home," said the eagle, "I have seven little eaglets, and you have only given me six nuts to take to them. Will you not give me your other nut to take to my youngest little eaglet?"

On hearing this the sailor fingered the nut in his pocket and looked at the bird, and was just going to give it to him, when Trevina laid her hand on his arm to stop him, and turning to the eagle said,—

"It is no use your asking for the nut, for he will not give it to you. I know quite well that you have no little eaglets at home, that it is all false, and that you only say it to get the nut from him."

Then the eagle turned, and, giving one fearful shriek, rose into the air and flew

away, and Rupert and Trevina never saw him more.

* * * * *

A whole year had passed away since the Queen had dreamt the strange dream, and still her head was bald ; and no one could tell how to make the hair grow again. Men had sought far and wide. The King had sent messengers to every part of the world. All sorts of strange plants had been brought and stranger remedies suggested. But it was quite evident that no one had found the real Hair Tree.

The Queen had been ill for months, and now scarcely ever appeared in public. At last, when she had quite made up her mind that she would never recover her hair, she sent for the King, and told him that she was seriously thinking of shutting herself up for the rest of her life, and would only consent again to appear on the condition that he should order that all the women in the land should have their heads shaved and wear caps just like hers. The King, in great consternation, begged her to reconsider her decision, but she was firm, and as he could not bear the thought of parting with her, he at last consented

to publish a proclamation ordering that all the women in the country, from the greatest duchess to the poorest beggar, were to have their heads shaved, in order that the Queen might not be annoyed by the sight of their hair.

Great was the anger and discontent with which this order was received, but the people dared not disobey the King, so after a great deal of grumbling they agreed to submit in silence, and a day was settled on which the shaving was to take place, for the Queen wished it to be performed in public.

At her suggestion the King had an immense scaffold put up in the market-place, and on it the court barber was to stand, whilst all the women, from the highest to the lowest, came before him in turn and had their heads shaved quite close. State seats were erected on one side, on which the King and Queen and court would sit to watch the shaving.

When all this was settled, the Queen grew as cheerful as possible. She said it was almost as good as having her own hair back again.

The different messengers whom the King had sent in search of the Hair Tree still kept return-

ing, each one bringing with him some strange new plant, but nothing that could do the Queen any good; and thus the time passed till the shaving day came.

All the streets were hung with black, and the chair in which the ladies were to sit to be shaved was hung with black also.

Early in the morning a great crowd had assembled, and then the King and Queen came down and took seats, and the shaving was to begin.

The crier took out his list of the ladies' names, and called out the first, which was that of a duchess who was quite young and very beautiful. She rose slowly from her seat, sobbing bitterly, and walked towards the black chair.

She was dressed in a long black serge dress, without any ornament, but her beautiful white neck and arms were bare, and over her shoulders to her waist rippled her bright soft brown hair. She looked so young and so miserable that there was a general groan at the idea that all her lovely locks must fall.

With a last sob, the duchess took her seat in the dreadful chair, and, closing her eyes, resigned

herself to her fate. The barber sharpened his razor, and was just going to begin, whilst all held their breath from excitement, when a voice was heard crying "*Stop!*" And in a minute all saw a sailor rushing towards the scaffold, panting and out of breath, but holding out something in his right hand.

"*Stop!*" he shouted, as loudly as he could, directly he found breath to speak. "I have got it—the hair seeds from the *real Hair Tree!*"

On hearing this the barber flung away his razor, and the Queen screamed outright.

The courtiers and the King danced a jig for joy, whilst the duchess who was to have been shaved, threw her arms round the sailor's neck, and kissed him at once.

"Only try," cried Rupert, eagerly, "before you shave them; they came from the Hair Tree. I picked them myself."

On hearing this, the Queen, unable to contain her impatience any longer, dashed through the crowd, and, pushing the duchess on one side, sprang into the black chair herself.

"There is no time like the present," she cried, pulling off her muslin cap, and flinging it to

the ground, quite heedless of showing her bare shining head to the crowd. "Put some on yourself, dear sailor, and let us see how they do."

A thrill of excitement ran through the crowd, whilst, amidst a dead silence, Rupert opened the packet, and carefully and slowly sprinkled the seeds over the Queen's bent head. In a moment a soft fine down began to appear all over it, growing thicker and darker every moment, till it was curly hair, which grew longer and longer as they watched it.

"How does it do?" gasped the Queen. "My head feels very queer. Is it growing?" But she had little need to ask the question, for no sooner were the words out of her mouth than the soft curly locks, of her own old colour, fell over her shoulders, and grew till they reached her feet. At sight of them she shrieked with joy, and fainted, whilst the King and courtiers and all the crowd shouted and hurrahed as if they had gone mad.

That night the city was illuminated, and there was a great ball at the palace, and next day the King and Queen and all the court went to witness the wedding of Rupert and Trevina,

after which the King presented Rupert with the reward.

One of his remaining nuts Rúpert gave to the King to hang over the palace door, and defend them from all charms of bad fairies ; but the other he and Trevina always kept, which is perhaps the reason they lived so happily together all the rest of their lives.





A TOY PRINCESS.



MORE than a thousand years ago, in a country quite on the other side of the world, it fell out that the people all grew so very polite that they hardly ever spoke to each other. And they never said more than was quite necessary, as "Just so," "Yes indeed," "Thank you," and "If you please." And it was thought to be the rudest thing in the world for any one to say they liked or disliked, or loved or hated, or were happy or miserable. No one ever laughed aloud, and if any one had been seen to cry they would at once have been avoided by their friends.

The King of this country married a Princess from a neighbouring land, who was very good and beautiful, but the people in her own home were as unlike her husband's people as it was possible to be. They laughed, and talked, and were noisy and merry when they were happy, and cried and lamented if they were sad. In fact, whatever they felt they showed at once, and the Princess was just like them.

So when she came to her new home, she could not at all understand her subjects, or make out why there was no shouting and cheering to welcome her, and why every one was so distant and formal. After a time, when she found they never changed, but were always the same, just as stiff and quiet, she wept, and began to pine for her own old home.

Every day she grew thinner and paler. The courtiers were much too polite to notice how ill their young Queen looked; but she knew it herself, and believed she was going to die.

Now she had a fairy godmother, named Taboret, whom she loved very dearly, and who was always kind to her. When she knew her end was drawing near she sent for her god-

mother, and when she came had a long talk with her quite alone.

No one knew what was said, and soon afterwards a little Princess was born, and the Queen died. Of course all the courtiers were sorry for the poor Queen's death, but it would have been thought rude to say so. So, although there was a grand funeral, and the court put on mourning, everything else went on much as it had done before.

The little baby was christened Ursula, and given to some court ladies to be taken charge of. Poor little Princess! *She* cried hard enough, and nothing could stop her.

All her ladies were frightened, and said that they had not heard such a dreadful noise for a long time. But, till she was about two years old, nothing could stop her crying when she was cold or hungry, or crowing when she was pleased.

After that she began to understand a little what was meant when her nurses told her, in cold, polite tones, that she was being naughty, and she grew much quieter.

She was a pretty little girl, with a round baby face and big merry blue eyes; but as she grew

older, her eyes grew less and less merry and bright, and her fat little face grew thin and pale. She was not allowed to play with any other children, lest she might learn bad manners ; and she was not taught any games or given any toys. So she passed most of her time, when she was not at her lessons, looking out of the window at the birds flying against the clear blue sky ; and sometimes she would give a sad little sigh when her ladies were not listening.

One day the old fairy Taboret made herself invisible, and flew over to the King's palace to see how things were going on there. She went straight up to the nursery, where she found poor little Ursula sitting by the window, with her head leaning on her hand.

It was a very grand room, but there were no toys or dolls about, and when the fairy saw this, she frowned to herself and shook her head.

"Your Royal Highness's dinner is now ready," said the head nurse to Ursula.

"I don't want any dinner," said Ursula, without turning her head.

"I think I have told your Royal Highness

before that it is not polite to say you don't want anything, or that you don't like it," said the nurse. "We are waiting for your Royal Highness."

So the Princess got up and went to the dinner-table, and Taboret watched them all the time. When she saw how pale little Ursula was, and how little she ate, and that there was no talking or laughing allowed, she sighed and frowned even more than before, and then she flew back to her fairy home, where she sat for some hours in deep thought.

At last she rose, and went out to pay a visit to the largest shop in Fairyland.

It was a queer sort of shop. It was neither a grocer's, nor a draper's, nor a hatter's. Yet it contained sugar, and dresses, and hats. But the sugar was magic sugar, which transformed any liquid into which it was put; the dresses each had some special charm, and the hats were wishing-caps. It was, in fact, a shop where every sort of spell or charm was sold.

Into this shop Taboret flew; and as she was well known there as a good customer, the master of the shop came forward to meet her at once,

and bowing, begged to know what he could get for her.

"I want," said Taboret, "a Princess."

"A Princess!" said the shopman, who was in reality an old wizard. "What size do you want it? I have one or two in stock."

"It must look now about six years old. But it must grow."

"I can make you one," said the wizard, "but it'll come rather expensive."

"I don't mind that," said Taboret. "See! I want it to look exactly like this," and so saying she took a portrait of Ursula out of her bosom and gave it to the old man, who examined it carefully.

"I'll get it for you," he said. "When will you want it?"

"As soon as possible," said Taboret. "By to-morrow evening if possible. How much will it cost?"

"It'll come to a good deal," said the wizard, thoughtfully. "I have such difficulty in getting these things properly made in these days. What sort of a voice is it to have?"

"It need not be at all talkative," said Taboret,

“so that won’t add much to the price. It need only say, ‘If you please,’ ‘No, thank you,’ ‘Certainly,’ and ‘Just so.’”

“Well, under those circumstances,” said the wizard, “I will do it for four cat’s footfalls, two fish’s screams, and two swan’s songs.”

“It is too much,” cried Taboret. “I’ll give you the footfalls and the screams, but to ask for swans’ songs!”

She did not really think it dear, but she always made a point of trying to beat tradesmen down.

“I can’t do it for less,” said the wizard, “and if you think it too much, you’d better try another shop.”

“As I am really in a hurry for it, and cannot spend time in searching about, I suppose I must have it,” said Taboret; “but I consider the price very high. When will it be ready?”

“By to-morrow evening.”

“Very well, then, be sure it is ready for me by the time I call for it, and whatever you do, don’t make it at all noisy or rough in its ways;” and Taboret swept out of the shop and returned to her home.

Next evening she returned and asked if her job was done.

"I will fetch it, and I am sure you will like it," said the wizard, leaving the shop as he spoke. Presently he came back, leading by the hand a pretty little girl of about six years old—a little girl so like the Princess Ursula that no one could have told them apart.

"Well," said Taboret, "it looks well enough. But are you sure that it's a good piece of workmanship, and won't give way anywhere?"

"It's as good a piece of work as ever was done," said the wizard, proudly, striking the child on the back as he spoke. "Look at it! Examine it all over, and see if you find a flaw anywhere. There's not one fairy in twenty who could tell it from the real thing, and no mortal could."

"It seems to be fairly made," said Taboret, approvingly, as she turned the little girl round. "Now I'll pay you, and then will be off;" with which she raised her wand in the air and waved it three times, and there arose a series of strange sounds.

The first was a low tramping, the second shrill and piercing screams, the third voices of

wonderful beauty, singing a very sorrowful song.

The wizard caught all the sounds and pocketed them at once, and Taboret,, without ceremony, picked up the child, took her head downwards under her arm, and flew away.

At court that night the little Princess had been naughty, and had refused to go to bed. It was a long time before her ladies could get her into her crib, and when she was there, she did not really go to sleep, only lay still and pretended, till every one went away ; then she got up and stole noiselessly to the window, and sat down on the window-seat all curled up in a little bunch, while she looked out wistfully at the moon. She was such a pretty soft little thing, with all her warm bright hair falling over her shoulders, that it would have been hard for most people to be angry with her. She leaned her chin on her tiny white hands, and as she gazed out, the tears rose to her great blue eyes ; but remembering that her ladies would call this naughty, she wiped them hastily away with her nightgown sleeve.

“ Ah moon, pretty bright moon ! ” she said to herself, “ I wonder if they let you cry when you

want to. I think I'd like to go up there and live with you ; I'm sure it would be nicer than being here."

"Would you like to go away with me?" said a voice close beside her ; and looking up she saw a funny old woman in a red cloak, standing near to her. She was not frightened, for the old woman had a kind smile and bright black eyes, though her nose was hooked and her chin long.

"Where would you take me?" said the little Princess, sucking her thumb, and staring with all her might.

"I'd take you to the sea-shore, where you'd be able to play about on the sands, and where you'd have some little boys and girls to play with, and no one to tell you not to make a noise."

"I'll go," cried Ursula, springing up at once.

"Come along," said the old woman, taking her tenderly in her arms and folding her in her warm red cloak. Then they rose up in the air, and flew out of the window, right away over the tops of the houses.

The night air was sharp, and Ursula soon fell asleep ; but still they kept flying on, on, over hill and dale, for miles and miles, away from the palace, towards the sea.

Far away from the court and the palace, in a tiny fishing village, on the sea, was a little hut where a fisherman named Mark lived with his wife and three children. He was a poor man, and lived on the fish he caught in his little boat. The children, Oliver, Philip, and little Bell, were rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed. They played all day long on the shore, and shouted till they were hoarse. To this village the fairy bore the still sleeping Ursula, and gently placed her on the door-step of Mark's cottage ; then she kissed her cheeks, and with one gust blew the door open, and disappeared before any one could come to see who it was.

The fisherman and his wife were sitting quietly within. She was making the children clothes, and he was mending his net, when without any noise the door opened and the cold night air blew in.

"Wife," said the fisherman, "just see who's at the door."

The wife got up and went to the door, and there lay Ursula, still sleeping soundly, in her little white nightdress.

The woman gave a little scream at sight of the child, and called to her husband.

“ Husband, see, here’s a little girl ! ” and so saying she lifted her in her arms, and carried her into the cottage. When she was brought into the warmth and light, Ursula awoke, and sitting up, stared about her in fright. She did not cry, as another child might have done, but she trembled very much, and was almost too frightened to speak.

Oddly enough, she had forgotten all about her strange flight through the air, and could remember nothing to tell the fisherman and his wife, but that she was the Princess Ursula ; and, on hearing this, the good man and woman thought the poor little girl must be a trifle mad. However, when they examined her little nightdress, made of white fine linen and embroidery, with a crown worked in one corner, they agreed that she must belong to very grand people. They said it would be cruel to send the poor little thing away on such a cold night, and they must of course keep her till she was claimed. So the woman gave her some warm bread-and-milk, and put her to bed with their own little girl.

In the morning, when the court ladies came to wake Princess Ursula, they found her sleeping as

usual in her little bed, and little did they think it was not she, but a toy Princess placed there in her stead. Indeed the ladies were much pleased ; for when they said, " It is time for your Royal Highness to arise," she only answered, " Certainly," and let herself be dressed without another word. And as the time passed, and she was never naughty, and scarcely ever spoke, all said she was vastly improved, and she grew to be a great favourite.

The ladies all said that the young Princess bid fair to have the most elegant manners in the country, and the King smiled and noticed her with pleasure.

In the meantime, in the fisherman's cottage far away, the real Ursula grew tall and straight as an alder, and merry and light-hearted as a bird.

No one came to claim her, so the good fisherman and his wife kept her and brought her up among their own little ones. She played with them on the beach, and learned her lessons with them at school, and her old life had become like a dream she barely remembered.

But sometimes the mother would take out the little embroidered nightgown and show it to her,

and wonder whence she came, and to whom she belonged.

"I don't care who I belong to," said Ursula ; "they won't come and take me from you, and that's all I care about." So she grew tall and fair, and as she grew, the toy Princess, in her place at the court, grew too, and always was just like her, only that whereas Ursula's face was sunburnt and her cheeks red, the face of the toy Princess was pale, with only a very slight tint in her cheeks.

Years passed, and Ursula at the cottage was a tall young woman, and Ursula at the court was thought to be the most beautiful there, and every one admired her manners, though she never said anything but "If you please," "No, thank you," "Certainly," and "Just so."

The King was now an old man, and the fisherman Mark and his wife were grey-headed. Most of their fishing was now done by their eldest son, Oliver, who was their great pride. Ursula waited on them, and cleaned the house, and did the needlework, and was so useful that they could not have done without her. The fairy Taboret had come to the cottage from time

to time, unseen by any one, to see Ursula, and always finding her healthy and merry, was pleased to think of how she had saved her from a dreadful life. But one evening when she paid them a visit, not having been there for some time, she saw something which made her pause and consider. Oliver and Ursula were standing together watching the waves, and Taboret stopped to hear what they said,—

“When we are married,” said Oliver, softly, “we will live in that little cottage yonder, so that we can come and see them every day. But that will not be till little Bell is old enough to take your place, for how would my mother do without you?”

“And we had better not tell them,” said Ursula, “that we mean to marry, or else the thought that they are preventing us will make them unhappy.”

When Taboret heard this she became grave, and pondered for a long time. At last she flew back to the court to see how things were going on there. She found the King in the middle of a state council. On seeing this, she at once made herself visible, when the King begged her to be

seated near him, as he was always glad of her help and advice.

"You find us," said his Majesty, "just about to resign our sceptre into younger and more vigorous hands; in fact, we think we are growing too old to reign, and mean to abdicate in favour of our dear daughter, who will reign in our stead."

"Before you do any such thing," said Taboret, "just let me have a little private conversation with you;" and she led the King into a corner, much to his surprise and alarm.

In about half an hour he returned to the council, looking very white, and with a dreadful expression on his face, whilst he held a handkerchief to his eyes.

"My lords," he faltered, "pray pardon our apparently extraordinary behaviour. We have just received a dreadful blow; we hear on authority, which we cannot doubt, that our dear, dear daughter"—here sobs choked his voice, and he was almost unable to proceed—"is—is—in fact, not our daughter at all, and only a *sham*." Here the King sank back in his chair, overpowered with grief, and the fairy Taboret, stepping to

the front, told the courtiers the whole story; how she had stolen the real Princess, because she feared they were spoiling her, and how she had placed a toy Princess in her place. The courtiers looked from one to another in surprise, but it was evident they did not believe her.

“The Princess is a truly charming young lady,” said the Prime Minister.

“Has your Majesty any reason to complain of her Royal Highness’s conduct?” asked the old Chancellor.

“None whatever,” sobbed the King; “she was ever an excellent daughter.”

“Then I don’t see,” said the Chancellor, “what reason your Majesty can have for paying any attention to what this—this person says.”

“If you don’t believe me, you old idiots,” cried Taboret, “call the Princess here, and I’ll soon prove my words.”

“By all means,” cried they.

So the King commanded that her Royal Highness should be summoned.

In a few minutes she came, attended by her ladies. She said nothing, but then she never did speak till she was spoken to. So she

entered, and stood in the middle of the room silently.

"We have desired that your presence be requested," the King was beginning, but Taboret without any ceremony advanced towards her, and struck her lightly on the head with her wand. In a moment the head rolled on the floor, leaving the body standing motionless as before, and showing that it was but an empty shell. "Just so," said the head, as it rolled towards the King, and he and the courtiers nearly swooned with fear.

When they were a little recovered, the King spoke again. "The fairy tells me," he said, "that there is somewhere a real Princess whom she wishes us to adopt as our daughter. And in the meantime let her Royal Highness be carefully placed in a cupboard, and a general mourning be proclaimed for this dire event."

So saying he glanced tenderly at the body and head, and turned weeping away.

So it was settled that Taboret was to fetch Princess Ursula, and the King and council were to be assembled to meet her.

That evening the fairy flew to Mark's cottage,

and told them the whole truth about Ursula, and that they must part from her.

Loud were their lamentations, and great their grief, when they heard she must leave them. Poor Ursula herself sobbed bitterly.

"Never mind," she cried after a time, "if I am really a great Princess, I will have you all to live with me. I am sure the King, my father, will wish it, when he hears how good you have all been to me."

On the appointed day, Taboret came for Ursula in a grand coach and four, and drove her away to the court. It was a long, long drive; and she stopped on the way and had the Princess dressed in a splendid white silk dress trimmed with gold, and put pearls round her neck and in her hair, that she might appear properly at court.

The King and all the council were assembled with great pomp, to greet their new Princess, and all looked grave and anxious. At last the door opened, and Taboret appeared, leading the young girl by the hand.

"That is your father!" said she to Ursula, pointing to the King; and on this, Ursula, needing

no other bidding, ran at once to him, and putting her arms round his neck, gave him a sounding kiss.

His Majesty almost swooned, and all the courtiers shut their eyes and shivered.

"This is really!" said one.

"This is truly!" said another.

"What have I done?" cried Ursula, looking from one to another, and seeing that something was wrong, but not knowing what. "Have I kissed the *wrong person*?" On hearing which every one groaned.

"Come now," cried Taboret, "if you don't like her, I shall take her away to those who do. I'll give you a week, and then I'll come back and see how you're treating her. She's a great deal too good for any of you." So saying she flew away on her wand, leaving Ursula to get on with her new friends as best she might. But Ursula could not get on with them at all, as she soon began to see.

If she spoke or moved they looked shocked, and at last she was so frightened and troubled by them that she burst into tears, at which they were more shocked still.

"This is indeed a change after our sweet Princess," said one lady to another.

"Yes, indeed," was the answer, "when one remembers how even after her head was struck off she behaved so beautifully, and only said, 'Just so.'"

And all the ladies disliked poor Ursula, and soon showed her their dislike. Before the end of the week, when Taboret was to return, she had grown quite thin and pale, and seemed afraid of speaking above a whisper.

"Why, what is wrong?" cried Taboret, when she returned and saw how much poor Ursula had changed. "Don't you like being here? Aren't they kind to you?"

"Take me back, dear Taboret," cried Ursula, weeping. "Take me back to Oliver, and Philip, and Bell. As for these people, I *hate* them."

And she wept again.

Taboret only smiled and patted her head, and then went into the King and courtiers.

"Now, how is it," she cried, "I find the Princess Ursula in tears? and I am sure you are making her unhappy. When you had that

bit of wood-and-leather Princess, you could behave well enough to it, but now that you have a real flesh-and-blood woman, you none of you care for her."

"Our late dear daughter——" began the King, when the fairy interrupted him.

"I do believe," she said, "that you would like to have the doll back again. Now I will give you your choice. Which will you have—my Princess Ursula, the real one, or your Princess Ursula, the sham?"

The King sank back into his chair. "I am not equal to this," he said: "summon the council, and let them settle it by vote." So the council were summoned, and the fairy explained to them why they were wanted.

"Let both Princesses be fetched," she said; and the toy Princess was brought in with great care from her cupboard, and her head stood on the table beside her, and the real Princess came in with her eyes still red from crying and her bosom heaving.

"I should think there could be no doubt which one would prefer," said the Prime Minister to the Chancellor.

"I should think not either," answered the Chancellor.

"Then vote," said Taboret; and they all voted, and every vote was for the sham Ursula, and not one for the real one. Taboret only laughed.

"You are a pack of sillies and idiots," she said, "but you shall have what you want;" and she picked up the head, and with a wave of her wand stuck it on to the body, and it moved round slowly and said, "Certainly," just in its old voice; and on hearing this, all the courtiers gave something as like a cheer as they thought polite, whilst the old King could not speak for joy.

"We will," he cried, "at once make our arrangements for abdicating and leaving the government in the hands of our dear daughter;" and on hearing this the courtiers all applauded again.

But Taboret laughed scornfully, and taking up the real Ursula in her arms, flew back with her to Mark's cottage.

In the evening the city was illuminated, and there were great rejoicings at the recovery of the

Princess, but Ursula remained in the cottage and married Oliver, and lived happily with him for the rest of her life.



THROUGH THE FIRE.



LITTLE Jack sat alone by the fire, watching it sadly. He was seven years old, but so small and pale that he looked little

more than five, for he was a cripple. He had no brothers or sisters, and he was nearly always alone, for his mother, who was a widow, went out all day to teach music, and often in the evening also to play dance-music at children's parties. They lived on the third floor of a small house in a dull old street in London, and Jack spent nearly all day in the little lonely sitting-room by himself, sitting by the fire. To-

night he felt sadder than usual, for it was Christmas-eve, and his mother had gone to a child's party at a grand house, and she had said that there would most likely be a Christmas-tree there, with presents on it for all the little boys and girls, and Jack thought it very hard that when other children had so much more pleasure than he, they must even rob him of his own mother.

If she were at home she would sit by him on the hearthrug and take his head in her lap and tell him long, long stories of giants and fairies. Generally he liked her to go to parties, for, wherever it was, she never forgot to bring him something from the supper-table ; no matter how little a thing it might be, only a cracker or a single sweet, but he was sure to find something waiting for him on his pillow when he woke in the morning ; and, indeed, sometimes there had been quite a nice little parcel of sweets and crackers and dried fruits sent to him by the mistress of the house or some of the children, when his mother had dared to ask if she might take something to her little boy at home.

But to-night he wanted his mother herself, and did not care for anything she would bring him in

the morning. He sat and thought till the tears rose to his eyes, and he sobbed outright.

"It's a shame," he said, "a dreadful shame. I think it's too bad;" and he seized the poker, and gave the fire a great dig.

"For pity's sake, don't do that again," said a small voice from the flames; "it's enough to break one to bits."

Jack stopped crying and looked into the fire. There he saw a little figure, the strangest he had ever beheld, balancing itself skilfully on the top of a piece of burning coal. It was just like a little man, not more than three inches high, dressed from head to foot in orange-scarlet, the colour of flame, and wearing on his head a long pointed cap of the same colour.

"Who are you?" asked Jack, breathlessly.

"Don't you know that it's rude to ask questions?" said the mannikin, winking one eye. "However, if you very much want to know, I'm a fire-fairy."

"A fire-fairy!" repeated Jack, still staring and breathless.

"Yes; is that so very strange?"

"But I don't believe in fairies," said Jack,

unable to remove his eyes from the weird little figure.

The little man laughed.

"That doesn't make any difference to me," he said. "Perhaps you don't believe in wind-fairies or water-fairies either. But you'd never have a fire but for us; we light them, and keep them in. If I were to go away now, your fire would be out in an instant, and you might blow and blow it as much as you liked; it would be all no use, unless one of us were to come back and put the light into the coals."

"But how is it you don't get burnt up?" asked Jack.

"Burnt up!" said the little man, scornfully; "why, we breathe fire and live in it; we should go out at once if we weren't surrounded by it."

"Go out! What do you mean by going out. Do you mean that you'd die?"

"I don't know about dying," said the little man, "but of course, without care, one is liable to go out. But don't let's talk of unpleasant subjects."

"But do you mean that you live for ever?" asked Jack.

"With proper care there is no reason why one should go out after one is three hundred years old," said the little man, settling himself comfortably into a corner of burning coals. "Before that age we are very delicate, and the least wind is dangerous."

"But where do you live—where do you come from?" asked Jack.

"We live in the very middle of the earth, where there is always a nice comfortable fire; but when you have fires alight up here, we have to come up and attend to them."

"Then do you come to lamps and candles as well?" said Jack, "for they are fire."

"We leave that to the young folks," said the little man, with a yawn; "I never come up for anything less than a coal fire."

Jack was silent for a little; then he said,—

"I wonder I never saw you before."

"I have always been there; so it has been only your own stupidity," said the gnome.

"I wish I could get into the fire with you," said Jack; "I should so much like to see what it's like."

"You couldn't come without a proper dress,"

said the tiny man, "and even then I am afraid you'd find it warm."

"I shouldn't mind that," said Jack. "And in your own home, where you live, is it quite red and bright, like the middle of a fire?"

"It's a great deal better. Ah, that is worth seeing!" said the fairy, thrusting one arm over a burning coal, and skilfully balancing himself in a little jet of flame. "All round the palace where our King lives there's flame—flame—nothing but flame for miles, and the Princess's windows look on to burning hills. Ah, what a pity it is people are so discontented! If there is any one who ought to be happy, it's the Princess Pyra."

"Isn't she happy?" asked Jack.

"Don't be so inquisitive. She might be, if she liked."

"Then why isn't she?"

"It all came of sending her to school," said the little man, gravely. "If she'd never left her father's palace she would never have seen him. You must know that our King and Queen have only one daughter, Princess Pyra, and of course they are very proud of her, and wished her to make a good match. A fire King, whose

country is close to ours, proposed for her, and her father and mother settled that they would accept him ; but as she was very young, and they wished her to be well educated, they sent her to school for a year in a burning mountain, thinking it would give her a chance of seeing more of the world than if she always remained at home. But, as it turned out, it was a great mistake, for one day the water King's son, Prince Fluvius, came and looked over the top of the mountain, and saw our Princess ; and they fell in love with each other, and the Princess has never been happy since."

" Why can't they be married ? " asked Jack.

The little man burst into a roar of laughter.

" Why, you ought to know that it's impossible. In the first place, they can't go near each other, lest he should be dried up, or she should be put out. Besides which, our King would never hear of such a thing, as the water King is his bitterest enemy. Every evening after she first saw him, the Princess used to come to the top of the mountain, and the Prince came and sat a little way off, and then they talked together. Ah ! the King little thought what mischief was brewing. But

when he discovered her one evening, when he came to see her, sitting talking to Prince Fluvius, he *was* in a rage. He took her home at once, and was anxious to marry her to the fire Prince out of hand. But she grew so thin that the doctors said they feared if she were much excited she would go out altogether. It's a great pity she should be so silly."

"Is she pretty?" asked Jack.

"Pretty? Pretty's no word for her. She is lovely—beautiful! She is much the loveliest woman in Fireland, and she's wonderfully clever as well."

"Little man," said Jack, coaxingly, "take me with you, and show me your home. I would never tell any one, and it's *so* dull here. Do let me go with you."

"I don't see how it can be done," answered the little man. "Besides, you'd be frightened."

"I wouldn't, I wouldn't, indeed," said Jack. "Only try me, and see."

"Wait a minute, then;" and the little red figure disappeared into the brightest part of the fire. In a few seconds he appeared again, carrying a little red cap, and suit, and boots.

"Put on these," he said, throwing them into Jack's lap.

"How ever shall I get them on? Why, they're not as long as my arm." But no sooner had he touched them than he found himself growing smaller and smaller, until the clothes seemed quite the right size for him, and he easily slipped into them.

"Now take this," said the red man, and threw him a thin shining glass mask. Jack drew it over his face. It fitted exactly, and left no openings.

"Now," said the fire-man, "climb over the bars, and see how you like it."

Jack scrambled over the fender, and helping himself with the fire-irons, climbed on to the first bar. The red man leant down, and gave him his hand to help him. What a hot hand it was! It burnt like flame. Jack felt inclined to drop it, but he was afraid of seeming impolite, so he bit his lips, to prevent himself screaming, and scrambled over the bars right into the midst of the fire.

On looking round, he thought he was in a new world. He stood in the middle of rich, red-

glowing hills, from which sprouted jets of flame, like trees. Here and there was a black mountain, which smoked and hissed most alarmingly. But how hot it was! At first Jack felt as if he were going to faint, and could not breathe.

"Well," said the red man, who now seemed to Jack quite full-size, "how do you feel now?"

"It's warm," murmured poor Jack.

"If you can't bear this, you won't be able to stand Fireland. Better not come any farther," said the fairy.

"I'm all right," said Jack, making an effort. "I daresay soon I shall feel quite used to it. How does one get to Fireland?"

"I'll show you," said the man, taking a thin piece of stick from his pocket. This he took in both hands, and dug into the coal beneath his feet till he had made a good-sized hole. Then he took from his pocket some little marbles, and dropped them one by one into the hole, which gradually began to grow larger and larger, until it was an immense black gulf in the coal in front of him.

"Now come along," said the red man, sitting on

the edge, with his legs swinging over. "Get on to my shoulders, and put your legs round my neck, and give me your hands, and I'll take you quite safely. Only don't scream or call out, or I shall drop you."

Jack did as he was bid, and seated himself firmly on his companion's shoulders, holding on round his neck. He could not help feeling frightened when, without a word, his guide sprang into the hole, and began to fly through the darkness so fast that he felt giddy. They went down—down—down. It was pitch dark, and poor Jack felt quite sick with the quick motion. He would have called out for them to stop, only he feared that the red man would keep his threat of letting him fall.

At last, a long way beneath them, he saw a faint red light, growing larger and brighter every moment.

"There's Fireland," said his guide, stopping for a minute, "and we shall be there in a few seconds now." And on they went again quicker than before towards the light, which now grew so brilliant that Jack could scarcely bear to look at it.

"Here we are!" said the little man, as they passed from the darkness into the light through a kind of archway. Then he quietly shook Jack from his shoulders on to the ground, and sat down to rest beside him. When he had a little recovered from his giddiness and fright, Jack raised himself, and looked about him. It was quite as strange as the fire had seemed to him. There were great hills, and they were of every shade of red and orange, some pale, some bright, and on the hill-sides were lakes of fire. The sky was one mass of flame, and many of the hills smoked.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked the fire-fairy.

"It's certainly very odd," said Jack, fearful of saying what he really thought, lest he might be thought rude. "But where do you live? I don't see any houses."

"The towns are farther. If you want to see them, you must get on my shoulders again," said Jack's friend, taking him again on his back as he spoke.

On they went again, passing over the ground so quickly that Jack could not see half enough

of the strange country through which they passed.

At last they came in sight of a large city, with tall spires and bridges, and a little way out of it stood a palace made of red-hot iron, and glistening with precious stones.

"That's the King's palace," said the fire-man; "and as it's the thing most worth seeing in the whole place, we'd better go there first."

"Shall I see the Princess?" asked Jack, eagerly.

"Most likely she'll be in the garden, and then you can see her as much as you like."

They stopped in front of the garden gate, and the fire-fairy, pushing it open, told Jack he could go in, but he must not make a noise. It was the queerest palace and garden. Jack now saw that what he had at first supposed to be precious stones was nothing but different-coloured fire, spouting out all over the palace. There was blue fire, and red fire, and green fire, and yellow fire, shining against the palace walls just like jewels.

At first Jack thought that the garden was full of beautiful flowers, but when he drew near to them he saw that they were only fireworks in

the forms of flowers. There was every sort of catherine-wheel turning round as fast as possible, throwing off sparks ; and every now and then a brilliant rocket went up into the air, and fell in shining stars.

Jack ran from one thing to the other, examining it with delight, when his companion, seizing his arm, drew him on one side, saying, "The Princess!" and pointed to where a group of ladies were coming slowly down the path. In their midst walked the Princess, who, Jack thought, was the most beautiful lady he had ever seen.

Her long bright golden hair fell almost to her feet. Her face was very pale, and she walked very slowly and kept her eyes on the ground, with a very sad expression.

She wore a shining flame-coloured dress, with a long train, and one pale blue and silver catherine-wheel fixed in her bosom, and another in her hair.

She was surrounded by beautifully dressed ladies, but none so lovely as she ; only Jack wished she did not look so very sad. The ladies all talked together, but the Princess never said a word.

"Your Royal Highness should not walk too fast," said one.

"Had not your Royal Highness better sit down?" said another.

"Will your Royal Highness not return to the palace?" asked a third. But the Princess only shook her head in silence, and walked on as before.

Then Jack, seeing her so beautiful, and so unhappy, could contain himself no longer, but burst out,—

"Oh, poor Princess! how sorry I am for you!"

At this the Princess raised her eyes for the first time. Such bright eyes they were, shining just like stars, Jack could not bear to look at them, but had to turn his own another way.

"Who spoke?" said the Princess, in a low, sad voice. "Which of you spoke?"

The ladies said nothing, but looked at each other in surprise.

"Some one said she was sorry for me, and I am sure you need not mind my knowing which of you it was," continued the Princess, beginning to sob, only, instead of tears, sparks fell from her eyes.

Here all the ladies drew about her, and tried to soothe her.

"You know," said one, "that the doctors said that, whatever happened, your Royal Highness was not to excite yourself, or the consequences might be fatal."

"Pray be calm, your Royal Highness," said another. "You will really make yourself seriously ill if you go on in this way."

"But who spoke?" asked the Princess again. "I think it very unkind of you all not to tell me. It's the first time I have heard a kind voice since I left school."

At this Jack could keep silence no longer, and, despite the red fire-man, who did his best to hold him back, he strode in front of the Princess, and said,—

"If you please, your Royal Highness, it was I."

"You! And who are you?" asked the Princess, kindly.

"I'm a little boy, and my name is Jack."

"How did you come here?"

"I came with him," said Jack, pointing to the red fire-man. "And you must not be angry with him, for I made him bring me."

"I am not the least angry, either with him or

you," said the Princess, very graciously. "But I want to know why you said you pitied me."

"Because you look so unhappy, and I think it's very sad for you to be parted from your Prince," said Jack.

Here all the ladies crowded round him, and tried to stop his speaking, but the Princess said,—

"Silence! I insist upon it. It does no harm for me to hear him, and I will not allow you to stop him in this way. Thank you, little boy, for what you have said. And for you," she added, turning to Jack's first friend, "I am not the least angry with you, and I particularly desire that no one shall mention this to my father;" but just as she stopped speaking, a cloud of smoke was seen rolling over the hills, and the ladies cried,—

"The King! the King!"

"Go! go!" cried the Princess to Jack, and the fire-man without more ado seized him, and placing him on his shoulders flew through the air with him at a great rate, and was far from the palace before Jack could get breath to speak.

"A fine mess you have nearly got me into!" grumbled the little man. "It will be the last time I ever take you anywhere with me, you may

be sure. What would have happened to me if the King had come up and heard you talking to the Princess of the very subject he had forbidden us all to mention?"

Jack dared not say a word, as his companion was so angry, and on they went flying through the air at a dreadful pace. At last they reached the long dark tunnel and flew up it, and when they again came towards the light, the little man took Jack from his shoulders and flung him away with all his force, and he remembered nothing more till he found himself lying on the hearth-rug in his own room. It might all have been a dream, only he was so sure it wasn't.

The fire had gone out, and the only light in the room came from the street lamps. Jack jumped up and searched everywhere for any trace of the little man, but could find none. He ran to the fireplace and called, but there was no answer, and at last he went shivering and cold to bed to dream of the Princess and the strange bright country underground, of which no one knows.





N the morning he was awoke by his mother placing a little parcel in his hand as she kissed him. Jack was delighted when he opened it and found some crackers and sugar cakes and a wooden soldier off a Christmas-tree. He amused himself all the morning playing with them, but he could not forget the fire-people and the pale pretty Princess. He dared not tell his mother, lest he might make the fire-man angry, and prevent his showing himself again. Next evening he was alone again, and sat looking anxiously between the bars, but nothing could he see of the fire-people. Then he ran to the window and looked out, in search of the water Prince or the little wind-fairy, but neither could he see, though it rained hard, and the wind blew loudly. So night after night passed, his mother went out and he was left alone, and yet he saw no trace of him, and he began to fear he should never know more of the fire-people.

New Year's-eve came, and Jack's mother had to go out and leave him to watch the new year in alone. It was a miserable night. It rained in torrents, and the wind blew, in great melancholy gusts. Jack sat by the window, and looked out on the wet street and the driving clouds. He had given up looking in the fire for his little red friend, and to-night he was busy thinking of the new year which would begin to-morrow.

"When this next year is done," he said to himself, "I shall be eight years old. Mother says I am very small of my years. I wonder if I shall be bigger then."

"Little Jack," called a low sighing voice from the grate.

Jack started, and ran to the fireplace. The fire was almost out. There was only a dull red glare in the coals, but kneeling in it, holding on to the bars, was the fire Princess. She was paler than before, and looked quite transparent. Jack could see the coals plainly through her.

"Put on some more coal," she said, shivering. "There is not enough for me to burn here, and

if I don't keep up a good blaze I shall go out altogether."

Jack did as he was bid, and then sat down on the hearthrug, staring at the Princess with all his might. Her long bright hair fell over the bars, and though her face looked very small and pale, her eyes were immense, and glittered like diamonds.

"How beautiful you are!" he said at last.

"Am I?" said the Princess with a sigh. "So my Prince said. It was with the greatest difficulty I managed to get here to-night, but I was determined to come. Ever since I saw you, I have thought of you so much."

"Have you?" said Jack, still staring.

"Yes, you were so sorry for me, and all my people are so unkind. Now I want you to do me a favour."

"What is it?" asked Jack.

"Let the Prince come here and speak to me."

"How am I to bring him?" said Jack.

"I will show you. Is it raining to-night?"

"Yes, fast."

"That is very lucky; some of his people are

sure to be about. Then all you must do is, to open the window and wait."

"But the rain will come into the room," said Jack.

"No, it will not, and if it does it will not do you any harm. You can't be quenched with water. Be a good boy, and do as I tell you."

So Jack threw open one of the windows. A great gust of wind blew into the room, and blew the cold wet rain into his face. The fire around the Princess broke out into a blaze, and then sank away, but she did not move, but called to Jack to stand between her and the window to keep off the draught and wet. He did as she bade him, and then she began to sing.

First she sang in a low voice, then her song grew louder and louder, and clearer and clearer. At last she stopped and said,—

"Now, little Jack, look on the window-sill and tell me what you see."

Jack ran to the window, and just outside, seated on the sill, in a little pool of water, was a tiny man dressed in a dull green dress. He had long wavy hair, that looked heavy and wet, and

his clothes were shiny with water. He eyed Jack very crossly for a minute or two, then he said,—

“Who are you, and what do you want?”

“Tell him,” whispered the Princess, “that he must bring Prince Fluvius here;” and Jack repeated to the water-fairy what she said.

“And who are you who dares to ask me to bring the Prince?” said he. “Do you think our Prince is to be taken about anywhere and everywhere, just because mortals want him.” But, on hearing this, the Princess began to sing again in the same soft voice, growing louder and louder, till the water-fairy sprang up, promising to bring Prince Fluvius, or do anything else Jack wished, if only the song would cease, as he could not endure the heat, for it was a spell the Princess sang, and if she had gone on he would have been dried up altogether.

Then the Princess leaned back amongst the coals in silence. The water-fairy at once disappeared, and Jack stood at the window watching for what would come with great interest.

The rain fell in torrents, and suddenly the

room began to grow very dark. When the Princess saw this she raised her head.

"He is coming," she said; and immediately there shot out from her, on all sides, a brilliant golden light, in the midst of which she looked even more beautiful than before. Then there floated up outside the window a white cloud, which rested on the sill. The cloud opened, and from it stepped the figure of a young man, gorgeously dressed in silver and green. He was about the size of the Princess, and next to her Jack thought he was the most beautiful little creature he had ever seen. He had long dark curls hanging down, and a sweet pale face, with eyes of a deep blue, just the colour of the sea.

At sight of Princess Pyra he started, and would have dashed right up to the bars, had she not begged him for both their sakes not to come inside the window.

"It is you, my darling," he said, leaning into the room. "And I believed I should never see you again. Oh, let me only once take you in my arms!"

"Do not think of such a thing," called the Princess. "It would be fatal to us both."

"At any rate, we should perish together," said Prince Fluvius.

"And how much better to live together!" said the Princess.

"If that were possible," said the Prince, sighing.

"And it is possible," said the Princess. "Since I last saw you I have learnt that there is only one person in the world who can help us, and that is the old man who sits on the North Pole. He knows everything, and could we but send to him and ask his advice, he would tell us what to do."

"But how are we to send to him?" said the Prince. "If you were to go, the sea would surely quench you on the way, and I should be frozen directly I got to the ice-people, and never return to you. As for the wind-fairies, who are constantly there, they are such silly little things, they could never remember a message."

"Little Jack," cried the Princess, turning towards him, "you will go for us, will you not?"

"I?" cried Jack, frightened. "How am I to go?"

“ Nothing can be easier. One of the wind-fairies will take you and bring you back—as the Prince will direct. You shall go, to-night. Now, dear Jack, you will do it for us, will you not ? And we shall be so grateful.”

Jack did not know what to say, but he looked first at the Prince sitting on the window-sill with the rain pouring around him, looking wistfully towards him, with his handsome mournful eyes ; then he looked at the Princess kneeling on the glowing coals, entreating him with clasped hands to help them, while sparks fell from her bright eyes. And they were both so beautiful that he could not bear to refuse them, and was silent.

The Princess saw at once that he wavered, and said, smiling, “ Then it is settled ; you will go for us. And now, dear little Jack, listen very carefully to all the directions we give you, and be sure you do all we tell you. The old man at the North Pole is very mischievous and cunning, and always does his best to deceive any one who comes to him for help. And there is one thing of which you must be very careful. You must not, whatever happens, ask him more than one question. The first question that he is

asked he is bound to answer truthfully, but if you ask him more than one, he will at once seize you and keep you under the ice. He will do all he can to tempt you to ask more than one, but you must not mind him. And be sure to remember exactly what he says about me."

"What am I to say, then?" asked Jack.

"Say, 'I come from the fire Princess Pyra, and she is in love with Prince Fluvius, the water Prince, and wants to know how they are to be married;' and then shut your lips and do not speak again, whatever he says. When you come to the ice-country, you will find it very cold, so I shall give you a fire-ball to keep you warm. And be sure you do not stop and talk to the ice-people, for if you do you will be frozen to death."

"How am I to go?" asked Jack again.

"Go to the window, and you will see the wind-fairy who is to take you."

Jack did as he was told, and saw standing beside Prince Fluvius a little man dressed in light dust-coloured clothes, which hung on him loosely, seeming barely to touch him.

His face was very cheerful, but there was

scarcely any expression in it, and whenever he moved there came a violent gust of wind.

"Are you ready?" asked the Prince, kindly.

"Yes," said Jack, feeling very much frightened.

"You need not be afraid, little Jack," said Prince Fluvius; "you have nothing to do but to sit on his shoulders, and he will take you quite safely."

So saying he touched him on the head, and Jack began to feel himself growing smaller and smaller, till he was the same size as the Prince and Princess.

"Come on, then," said the wind-fairy, in an odd gusty voice. Jack sat down on his shoulders in the same way as he had before sat upon the fire-fairy, and they prepared to start.

"Good-bye, little Jack," called the Princess from the fire. "When your turn comes, you will find that we shall not forget to help you."

"Good-bye, little Jack," echoed the Prince. "Do not forget all we have told you, and be sure you ask no second question of the old man."

"Good-bye," called Jack, and off they went. The rain beat into Jack's face, and he felt giddy

with the rate at which they flew, but he was silent, and held on tightly to the wind-fairy's neck.

On they went in silence, going over the tops of the houses, among the chimney-tops, in a way Jack thought frightful. Then they came to the country, and flew over fields and lanes. At last the clouds cleared away, and the moon came out, and Jack could see where they were going. He was getting more used to his position now, and felt less afraid to look about him. They flew over woods and rivers, and passed villages, which looked in the distance as small as if they were made of toy houses and churches. At last they came in sight of the sea, and Jack could keep silence no longer, but burst out,—

“I hope we are not going over there?”

“Indeed we are,” said, or rather puffed out, his companion, for his words came out like a gust of wind. “I thought you were never going to speak, and I did not like to speak first. How are you? I hope you feel pretty comfortable.”

“Pretty well,” answered Jack. “But I am afraid if we cross the sea I shall tumble in.”

“No, you shan't,” said the other. “I shall keep

tight hold of you. Oh! it's splendid when one gets into the middle of the sea. It's worth blowing there."

"Won't it be very cold?" asked Jack.

"Nothing to speak of," said his companion, carelessly. "When we get among the ice and snow you may be chilly, but I've got the fire-ball the Princess gave me to blow in front of us, and that will keep you warm. I wonder what it is you want to ask the old man. Won't you tell me?"

"I think I'd better not," said Jack. "I suppose he is a very wise old man."

"Wise! He knows everything, and whatever you ask he's sure to give you, as long as it's the first question. Now we are going over the water."

Then they began to cross the sea. Jack, who had quite got over his fear, enjoyed the journey. The sea danced and sparkled beneath them. The moon threw a silver crest on the top of each tiny wave. Here and there were little ships sailing briskly along in the breeze. Soon they lost sight of land altogether, and then Jack thought it was glorious.

Nothing but the bright sparkling sea all round for miles. He laughed aloud for pleasure, and would have been quite happy, only for a thought—a naughty little thought—which would keep coming into his mind, and which grew and grew in spite of himself. He put up his hands to his head to keep it out, but there it was all the same, and there it remained. It was this—Why should he not ask the old man something for himself, instead of asking him about the Princess at all? Who would ever know? Why should he not ask him to make him straight and well? How pleased his mother would be if she came home that night to find her little boy a cripple no longer. How easy it would be to invent something to tell the Princess, and no one else would tell the truth. He knew it was naughty. He had promised, and he ought to keep his promise, and he thought of the Princess's pale face and the Prince's sad voice. And then he thought of his mother, and his own dull home, and could scarcely keep from crying.

“Listen!” said the wind-fairy. “Don’t you hear some one singing?”

Jack listened, and heard a sad sweet voice

singing a song, which was more beautiful than anything he had ever heard before.



“That is a mermaid,” said the wind-fairy, “and she is singing to a ship. She will go on singing

until the ship follows the sound. Then she will gradually lead it down into a whirlpool, and there it will be swallowed up, and the poor sailors will never return to their wives and little children. But I will go and blow the ship in another direction, whether it likes it or no, until it is out of the sound of her song, and then it will go on all right. Ah! men little think, when they complain of meeting gales of wind, that it is often for their own good, and that we are blowing them away from danger, not into it."

"A mermaid!" cried Jack. "I have never seen one. How much I should like to see her!"

"When we have gone to the ship we will go and look at her," said the wind-fairy. Then he flew to one side, till they came to a ship full of sailors sailing quietly along, and the wind-fairy began to blow with all his might. He blew till the sea rose in great heavy waves. The ship leaned over on one side. The captain shouted. The sailors threw up the ropes, and all trembled for fear. But much against their will the ship had to be turned about and go in another direction, and the wind-fairy never left off blowing till

she was many miles away from the sound of the mermaid's song.

"Now we will go and look at the mermaid," said he; and back they flew again to the same spot. There, beneath them, resting on the top of the waves, Jack saw a very beautiful maiden. She had sad green eyes and long green hair. When he looked closer he saw that she had a long bright tail instead of legs, but he thought her very beautiful all the same. She was still singing in a sad sleepy voice, and as he listened he began to long to jump into the sea beside her. And the longing grew so strong that he would have thrown himself into her arms at once, had not the wind-fairy seized him and flown off with him before he had time.

How pleased the wind-fairy was about the ship!

"I am so glad we came up," he said. "A few minutes later and the mermaid would have got it, and I could have done nothing;" and he laughed for pleasure.

Then when Jack thought of the poor ship, and how nearly she had perished, and saw how glad the good little wind-man was that he had

saved her, all the naughty thoughts left his mind.

"Surely," he said to himself, "if this poor silly little wind-fairy can be so glad when he has done a good deed, I ought to be glad to help other people and not to think of myself;" and he made up his mind that whatever happened he would not desert the Princess, but would do exactly what she had told him.

On they went. Presently it began to grow very cold. In the sea beneath were great lumps of floating ice, and all sorts of strange sea monsters were springing about.

"We had better stop here, and I will get out the Princess's fire-ball," said the fairy, and he placed Jack on a great lump of floating ice. On it there sat a family of seals, and much frightened they looked when he was dropped amongst them.

"Don't you know," said the old seal, turning sharply to him, "that it is exceedingly rude to come into a person's block of ice without asking leave?"

"I am very sorry, I am sure," murmured Jack.

"Let him alone," said another younger seal;

"I am sure he is very nice-looking. Would you like me to fetch you a little fish? I dare say you're very hungry, and I can catch you some in a moment if you like it."

Jack had not time to refuse before an older seal turned to him and said,—

"I am in want of a servant, if that's what you are come for, and as you are a nice tidy-looking person, I don't mind trying you; only I am very particular about my ice being bright, and the water all round it being kept clean."

They were all crowding round him, when the wind-fairy came up, and with one puff sent them all into the water again.

"See," he said, taking Jack up again, "I have sent on the ball before us, and it will keep you nice and warm."

Jack looked in front of him and saw a great ball of light, which the wind-fairy blew along as he went, and which sent out a soft warmth.

"How did you manage to carry it?" he asked of the fairy.

"It was quite a little thing when Princess Pyra gave it to me," he answered, "no bigger than a spark of light, and I have blown it up to

its present size. I doubt if it will keep alight till after we reach the North Pole, but it will keep you warm till then, and I shall be able to bring you back very quickly. Now we are coming to the ice-world."

Looking about him, Jack saw that the blocks of ice were growing larger and larger as they went on, and the spaces of water less and less, until at last they disappeared altogether, and nothing could be seen but an immense plain of solid ice. The moon shone upon it brightly, and moving noiselessly over the surface were a number of almost transparent forms of men and women, with deadly white faces and cold glittering eyes. They never spoke, but moved about swiftly and silently. They fled at the sight of the fire-ball, but when they saw Jack some of them stopped and motioned to him to stop too.

"Who are they?" he asked.

"They are ice-people," said his guide; "they live on the ice, and never speak, but always glide about as you see them now."

"Why mayn't we stop and see them?" said Jack.

His companion said nothing, but pointed down

to where some dark heavy-looking figures lay motionless beneath the clear ice.

"Do you see?" he said. "These are the bodies of men and women whom the ice-people have caught and frozen to death. If any unfortunate ship is wrecked among the ice-blocks, the ice-people at once flock round it and seize the passengers, and carry them over here and freeze them. They are as wicked and cruel as the mermaids. If I were to leave you for only a second, you would be frozen, and nothing could save you. Now we are coming near the North Pole. Look over there."

Jack looked away across the ice, and saw a clear pink light that darted up into the sky in bars. It seemed to come from a curious dark lump in the form of a mushroom, which stood up into the air.

"That is the North Pole," said his friend, "and the light comes from the old man's lantern."

"Does he live there all alone?" asked Jack.

"All alone, and he quarrels with every one. He used to be very good friends with the old man at the South Pole, and they often slid up and down the Pole to see each other. But one

day they had a quarrel, and now they're not on speaking terms."

"What did they quarrel about?" inquired Jack.

"How should I know?" said the wind-fairy, a little crossly. "One really can't be expected to remember all these little things;" for the wind-fairies cannot bear to be reminded of their want of memory. "Now say what you have to say to him quickly, and get it done, and then I'll take you back." So saying, he put him down on the ice, and sat down himself a little way off.

Jack looked about him, and began to think he must be dreaming. It was such a strange scene. All round was the clear cold ice, and just in front of him was the great lump in the form of a mushroom, made of some thick shining stuff like ivory, and seated right in the middle of it was a little old man. He nursed his knees with his arms and hugged a huge brown lantern full of holes, from which shot up into the air on each side the long bright pink rays which Jack had seen before. The old man wore a big brown cloak, and on his head a small skull-cap, from beneath which fell his long straight white hair.

He was a very ugly old man ; there was no doubt about that. His face was almost flat, and he had a large hook-nose. He seemed to be



asleep, for his head hung over on one side, and his eyes were shut. Jack dared not wake him, and stood watching him. He might have remained there for ever ; the old man would never

have moved of himself, if the wind-fairy had not blown a tremendous gust, which made the pink light in the lantern flicker, and the old man start up and open his eyes and see Jack.

"And who are you?" he asked, in a deep rolling voice. "Come to ask a question, I am sure. No one ever comes to see me unless they want to ask something. Come nearer and let me see you."

Jack drew near to the old man's seat, trembling much. He tried to remember what the Princess had told him to say, but somehow or other it had gone out of his head, and he did not know how to begin.

"Now what is it?" asked the old man, with a low chuckle. "Do you want me to tell you how to grow tall and straight, or where to find a big bag of money to take home to your mother? What do you want? Speak out, and don't be afraid."

Again the naughty thoughts came back into Jack's mind. He looked across to where the wind-fairy had fallen asleep on the ice. He gazed up at the pink light shining into the black sky. He thought of his mother, then of the poor fire

Princess, and making a violent effort, and shutting his eyes that he might not see the grinning face of the old man, he said,—

“ I’m come from the fire Princess, Princess Pyra, and she wants to marry the water King’s son, Prince Fluvius, and they’re afraid of touching each other, lest he should be dried up, or she put out. So, please, they want to know what to do.”

Here Jack stopped, and opened his eyes, and saw that the old man was shaking so with laughter that he feared he would tumble off the Pole altogether. He went on chuckling for such a time that Jack thought he would never stop. And when he had done, it was some time before he could find breath to speak, but sat panting and sighing, and every now and then beginning to laugh afresh. After a time, however, he was more calm, and then he said,—

“ Oh, the stupidity of people ! And all this time they are afraid of doing the very thing they ought to do. Of course it’s impossible for them to marry till he is dried up, or she is put out. What puts out fire but water ? and what dries up water but fire ? Princess Pyra has been educated at a good school. I should think she might

have known better. You had better go back to Prince Fluvius, and tell him to *give her a kiss*," and then the old man began to laugh again.

Jack stood by, sorely puzzled ; yet he dared not ask again. Then the old man turned to him, and said,—

"And now what do you want to ask next ? Let it be something for yourself this time, my little man. What shall it be ? I'll tell you whatever you want to know."

A dozen questions flashed into Jack's mind at once. How he longed to ask them ! But he remembered the Princess's warning, and held his tongue. He looked at the wind-fairy, who was still asleep, and wondered how he could wake him. The ice was so slippery that he dared not walk upon it. He was just trying to move off gently, when the old man caught him by his wrist with a long skinny hand, and held him firmly back.

"Come, now," he said, coaxingly, while his eyes sparkled cunningly ; "you'll never go back after asking only one question, when you have come so far. That would be very foolish. Ask something else while you *are* here."

He held Jack so tightly that he began to be frightened, and gave a violent wriggle, which knocked over the old man's lantern. It fell with an enormous crash, and woke the wind-fairy, who was at his side in an instant.

"Well," he said, "are you ready?"

"Quite," said Jack, his teeth chattering with fear, for the old fellow had flown into a violent rage, and was stretching out his long thin arms to catch him; but the wind-fairy blew in his face till he was forced to shut his eyes, and turn his head away. Then he took Jack on his shoulders, and flew off with him without another word.

"The fire-ball is gone out," he said to Jack, after they had gone a little way; "so I'm afraid you'll be cold. If you feel sleepy you may as well go to sleep. I won't let you fall; and I am about to go so quickly that you won't see anything we pass."

Jack did feel both sleepy and cold, and was very glad to fall into a doze, although he woke every now and then to ask if they were getting near home. At last the fairy said, "Now we are over London, and you'll be home in a few minutes."

"I hope my mother isn't come home yet," said

Jack. "She'd be so frightened if she came back, and didn't find me."

"Come back!" laughed the fairy. "Why, it isn't twelve o'clock yet, and the New Year is not come in. Here is the street where you live."

Jack could not believe that they had not been gone more than an hour. It seemed more like twenty.

From outside the window he could see the Prince kneeling on the sill in exactly the same position as when he had left him, and he wondered if the Princess was still sitting in the fire. Yes. When the wind-fairy placed him in the middle of the room, there she was in exactly the same place, with her golden hair falling over the bars.

"Well," cried she and the Prince together, "what did he say, little Jack? Tell us at once."

"I'm so cold," said Jack; "I'm almost frozen."

The Princess made a great blaze in the coals till the room was quite light. Then she turned to Jack again.

"Now," she said, "you must be warm. Do not keep us any longer in suspense."

Jack hesitated for a minute; then he looked at the Princess, and repeated what the old man had

said. “‘What puts out fire but water? what dries up water but fire? Tell him to give her a kiss!’”

Both Prince and Princess were silent when they heard this. Then the Prince said, with a sigh,—

“It is as I thought. He means that there is no hope for us, and that we must perish together. For my part, I am quite willing, as anything would be better than life without you, my Pyra.”

“He meant no such thing,” cried the Princess. “And I think now I begin to understand him. We must both be changed before we can be happy. Come, then, my Prince; I have no fear, and will willingly risk being quenched altogether, if there is a chance of our union.”

So saying, the Princess rose up, and stepped lightly from the grate on to the floor, surrounded by a halo of shining flame.

Jack screamed aloud, afraid lest the room should take fire; but in the same moment the Prince swept down from the window, and a flood of water splashed on to the floor. Then, without another word, the two rushed into each other's arms.

A great crash—a sound like a clap of thunder;

then the room was filled with smoke, through which Jack could see nothing. He felt frightened, and inclined to cry ; but in a minute or two he heard the soft voice of the Princess, calling to him,—

“ Jack, Jack ! ” and he saw the smoke clearing away.

There, in the middle of the room, stood the Princess Pyra—the same, yet not the same ; and beside her was Prince Fluvius, like himself in face and figure, and yet altered. His arm was about the Princess, and she leaned her head on his shoulder.

She was no longer surrounded by flames, and the weird brightness had passed from her face and dress.

Her hair looked softer and glittered less, and her eyes no longer seemed to burn, but beamed on Jack with a soft, mild light. The coloured catherine-wheel had disappeared from her bosom, and in its place was a bunch of real water-lilies. The Prince was no less changed. His eyes were bright and clear, his hair had lost its wet gloss, and was dry and curly ; his clothes looked crisp and firm.

The Princess bent her head with a sob, and this time real tears fell from her eyes. The Prince stooped to kiss them away, and as he did so the clock began to strike twelve, and all the bells in the great city rang out to tell the world that the New Year was born. And as they rang, the room was filled with the strangest forms. Fairies, goblins, elves, beautiful, ugly, and strange, floated in at the open window, and pressed around the Prince and Princess, and filled every nook and corner of the room. But they all looked kindly at Jack, and smiled at him, whilst he sat and cried for joy. With every stroke of the clock, with every clash of the bells, their number increased, but at the sixth stroke, the young couple rose from the ground, and began to float slowly towards the window.

“Good-bye, little Jack ; we shall never forget you,” called the Princess, as she floated away, and she waved her hand and smiled sweetly.

“Good-bye, little Jack,” echoed the Prince ; “we shall come when you want us ;” and as the clock struck the last stroke of twelve they passed out of the window. But still the Princess looked back, and kissed her hand. Then all the strange

company who had filled the room a moment before, arose and floated away around the Prince and Princess, and the room was left empty and cold, and little Jack was left alone.

* * * * *

A whole year had passed away, and Jack was turned seven years old. A whole long year, and he had heard or seen nothing of his fairy friends.

He had stirred the fire, he had watched the water, but in vain. They had gone, he feared, never to return, and he was fast beginning to think it must all have been a strange dream.

Christmas had come round again, but this was a very different Christmas to last year's, for little Jack was very ill, sick unto death, and lay in bed and could not move. His mother went out to no parties, for all day and night she sat by her little boy's bedside. How she cried! Jack could not quite understand why, for, when he was not in pain, he liked very well to lie in bed, with his mother sitting beside him to pet and amuse him.

Christmas week passed, and New Year's-eve came. His mother was so weary with watching, that she could keep awake no longer, and slept in spite of herself, in the arm-chair at the bedside.

Jack lay still, looking at the bright new moon through the window. A white crisp layer of snow covered the housetops, on which the moon's light shone silver and clear. As he lay and watched, the candle flickered down in its socket, and then went out altogether.

"This time last year I saw the Princess," said Jack to himself, "but I shan't see her again," and he sighed.

"Little Jack," called a low sweet voice that made him start and tremble.

He looked up at the window, and there, standing in a moonbeam, was the Princess, looking far more beautiful even than before, and the Prince stood close beside her.

"Did you think you would never see us again?" she asked. "But this will be for the last time, for we are going to live on the other side of the moon, and shall never come back again. Now see what we have brought you. This is a magic belt, and we have been a whole year making it. You must put it on, and it will make you quite strong, and in a few years you will no longer be a cripple."

Jack then saw that between them they bore a

kind of silver hoop, which they carried to the bedside, and the Princess said,—

“No one will know it is there, for directly it is upon you it will become invisible. Neither will you feel it yourself. Now sit up, and I will put it on for you.”

“Thank you, dear Princess,” said Jack, sitting up in bed.

Then the Prince and Princess slipped the belt over Jack’s head, and fastened it round his waist, but when it was on he could neither feel nor see it.

“Then farewell, dear little Jack,” said they. “This time we part for ever.” And the Princess stooped and kissed Jack on his forehead. Such a kiss it was, he had never felt anything so nice in his life. .

“Good-bye, dear, kind Princess,” he said, huskily, stretching out his hands towards her, for he felt very sad at the thought that he should never see her again.

Then both Prince and Princess floated up the moonbeam, and the Princess looked back and kissed her hand as before, and they flew out of the window, and Jack never saw them again.

But the next day, when the doctor came, he said

Jack was much better, and would soon be well, and it was all the new medicine he had given him.

And when Jack told his mother about the Princess, and the wonderful belt he wore, she only shook her head and said with a smile, "Dear boy, you have had a dream, and I am glad it was such a pleasant one."

Years afterwards, when he had grown to be a tall strong boy, he often felt for the belt, but never could find it; and when his mother rejoiced over his cure, and said it all came of his growing so much stronger after the illness he had had that winter, he smiled to himself and said,—

"Nay, it all came of my going to the North Pole for the fire Princess."



Illustrated Books for the Young.

DOG LIFE: Narratives exhibiting Instinct, Intelligence, Fidelity, Sympathy, and Attachment. Large 8vo, with Sixteen Illustrations from Sir E. Landseer. Cloth, 5s.

"The idea is a happy one, and well carried out. The stories are interesting and to a great degree novel."—*Spectator*.

"The narratives for the most part are very curious and interesting. The engravings after Landseer add to the value and interest of the work."—*Saturday Review*.

A BOY'S KINGDOM. By the Author of "Under the Lime Trees." With numerous Engravings. In crown 8vo, price 5s. cloth.

"Many and strange adventures are set forth with a clearness and simple force which will interest the young reader from first to last."—*Daily Telegraph*.

"Will be found by most boys and girls very pleasant reading."—*Record*.

THE WARRINGTONS ABROAD; or, Twelve Months in Germany, Italy, and Egypt. Thirty-two Engravings. 3s. 6d. cloth.

"A capital book, beautifully got up, and admirably illustrated. It is a marvel of cheapness, and yet will do credit to a drawing-room table."—*John Bull*.

THE LAND OF THE LION. Adventures amongst the Wild Animals of Africa. With Thirty-two Illustrations. 5s.

"A most attractive presentment of the habits and instincts of the Wild Animals of Africa. One of the best gift books of the season. The illustrations are excellent."—*John Bull*.

GOATLAND. A Story of Country Life. By the Author of "The Life of a Bear." With Fifty-two Illustrations. Cloth, 5s.

"A pleasant unpretending story of country life for children. The pictures animals they are sure to be delighted with."—*Nonconformist*.

HALF-HOURS WITH THE ANIMALS: Narratives exhibiting Intelligence, Instinct, Affection, &c. With Thirty-two Illustrations. Cloth, 5s.

"A charming book, and will be an immense favourite with children. The illustrations are lifelike."—*John Bull*.

STORIES FROM CHINA. By the Author of "Traveller's Tales." In crown 8vo., with Twenty-five Illustrations. Price 3s. 6d. cloth.

STORIES FROM THE SOUTH SEAS. By the Author of "Aunt Annie's Stories." In crown 8vo., with Twenty Illustrations. Price 3s. 6d. cloth.

HARRY LAWTON'S ADVENTURES. A Sailor's Wanderings in Strange Lands. New Edition. In small 8vo., Thirty-five Illustrations. Price 3s. 6d. cloth.

AMONG THE ARABS: Narratives of Life and Adventure in the East. With Numerous Illustrations. Price 3s. 6d. cloth.

THE LIFE OF AN ELEPHANT. By the Author of "The Life of a Bear." With Twenty-four Engravings. Price 5s. cloth.

THE LIFE OF A BEAR: His Birth, Education, and Adventures. With Twenty-four Engravings. Price 5s. cloth.

SEA BREEZES. By the Author of "Knights of the Frozen Sea." With Numerous Illustrations. In crown 8vo., price 3s. 6d. cloth.

"A capital school-prize or gift for the young."—*Record*.

"A pleasant story about boys, full of adventures by sea, especially in the Arctic regions."—*Standard*.

TRAVELLERS' TALES. By the Author of "Busy Bee."
In crown 8vo., with Forty-five Illustrations, price 3s. 6d.
cloth.

"A good and cheap book for a present."—*Nonconformist.*

MAY'S OWN BOY. By the Author of "Little Laddie."
With Twenty-four Illustrations by L. Frölich. Price 5s.
cloth.

LITTLE BLUE EYES, and other Stories of the Fields
and Flowers. By the Author of "Evening Amusement."
Price 3s. 6d. cloth.

THE STORY OF A SUMMER DAY. By the Au-
thor of "Busy Bee." With Twenty-four Illustrations by
Froment. Price 5s. cloth.

JESSIE'S WORK; or, Faithfulness in Little Things. A
Story for Girls. By MARY E. SHIPLEY. Second Edition.
In crown 8vo., Frontispiece, price 3s. 6d. cloth.

MRS. MOUSER: A Grandmother's Recollections. With
Twenty Illustrations. Price 5s. cloth.

MERRY ELVES; or, Little Adventures in Fairyland.
With Twenty-four Illustrations by C. O. Murray. Price
3s. 6d. cloth.

STORIES OF ENTERPRISE AND ADVENTURE.
A selection of Authentic Narratives. With Eight Engravings.
Crown 8vo., price 3s. 6d. cloth.

THE MIRROR OF TRUTH, and other Stories. By
Mrs. HAMERTON. In crown 8vo., Eight Engravings. Price
5s. cloth.

COPSLEY ANNALS PRESERVED IN PROVERBS.
Fifth Edition. Crown 8vo., 5s. cloth.

MRS. BLACKETT'S STORY. A Passage from the
"Copsley Annals." In square 16mo. Frontispiece, 1s. cloth.

THE VENDALE LOST PROPERTY OFFICE. In
square 16mo., Four Engravings. 2s. 6d. cloth.

PETER LIPP; or, the Story of a Boy's Venture. Adapted
from the French. Crown 8vo., Twenty-six Engravings. 5s.
cloth.

BROOK SILVERTONE, AND THE LOST LILIES:
two tales. By Mrs. MARSHALL. With Fourteen Engrav-
ings. A New Edition, price 2s. 6d.

HOLIDAY PLEASURES. With Twelve Etchings by
Rudolf Geissler. A companion volume to "Little Max."
Large 8vo., price 5s. cloth.

LITTLE ROSY'S PICTURE BOOK. With Twenty-
four Plates by L. Frölich: printed in colours. Price 3s. 6d.
cloth.

THE MILLER'S CHILDREN. By the Author of
"Little Lasses and Lads." With coloured Illustrations by
Oscar Pletsch. In small 4to., 6s. 6d. cloth.

TONY AND PUSS. From the French of P. J. STAHL.
With Twenty-four Illustrations by L. Frölich. 8vo., 3s. 6d.
cloth.

OLD BARNABY'S TREASURE. By Mrs. J. M.
TANDY. In square 16mo., with Four Illustrations. Price
2s. 6d. cloth.

A BUTTERFLY CHASE. Translated by P. J. STAHL.
With Twenty-four Illustrations by Lorenz Frölich. Royal
8vo., 3s. 6d. cloth.

